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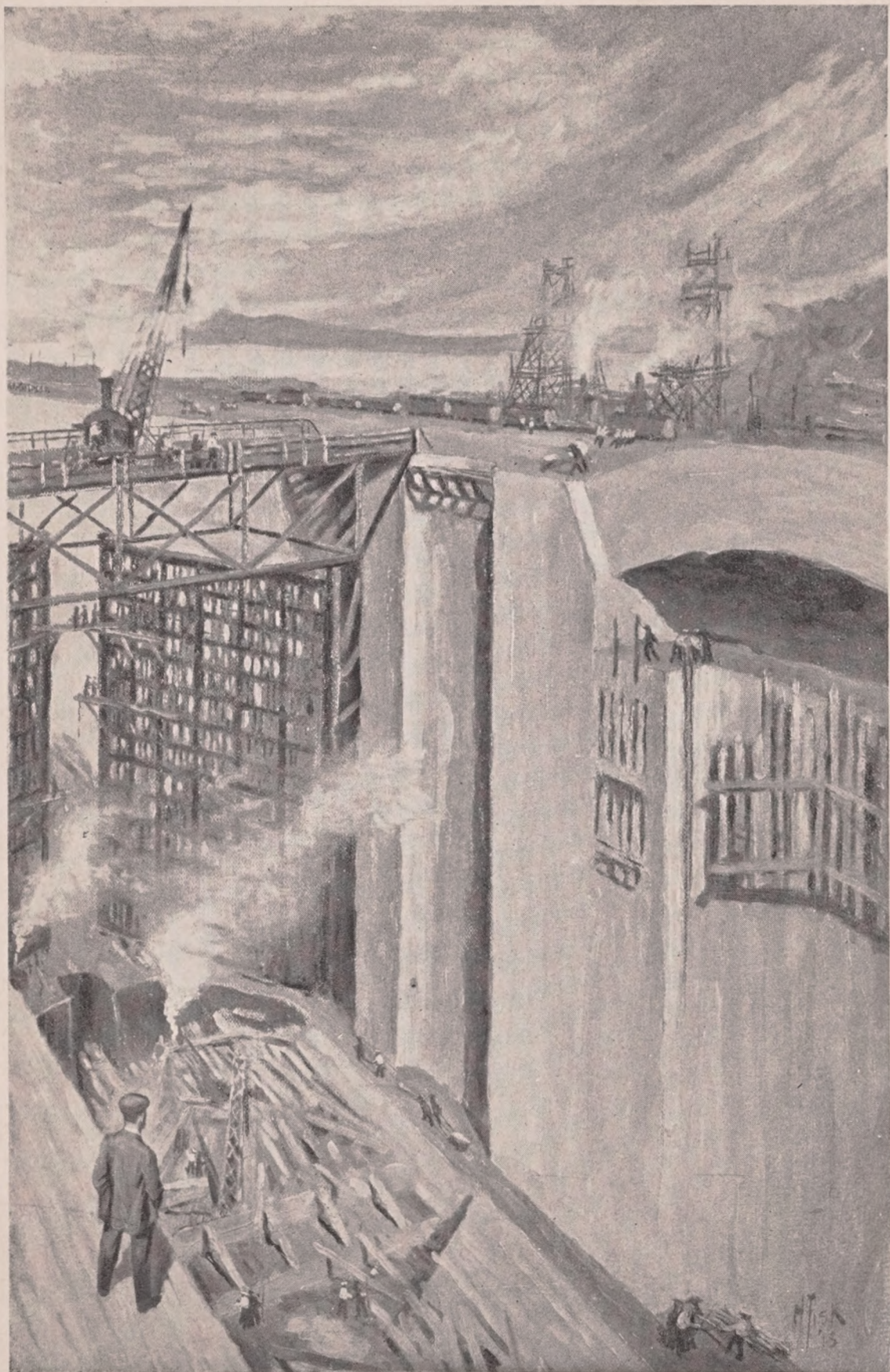
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See page 99.

"IT WAS LIKE LOOKING FROM THE ROOF OF A TEN-STORY BUILDING."

FOR UNCLE SAM, BOSS

OR

BOY SCOUTS AT PANAMA

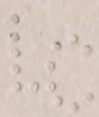
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BY

PERCY K. FITZHUGH

AUTHOR OF "ALONG THE MOHAWK TRAIL"

*Away down south in the Torrid Zone,
North latitude nearly nine,
Where the eight months' pour once past and o'er,
The sun four months shall shine;
Where 'tis eighty-six the whole year round,
And the folks can never agree;
Where the plantain grows and the hot wind blows,
Lies the Land of the Cocoanut Tree.*



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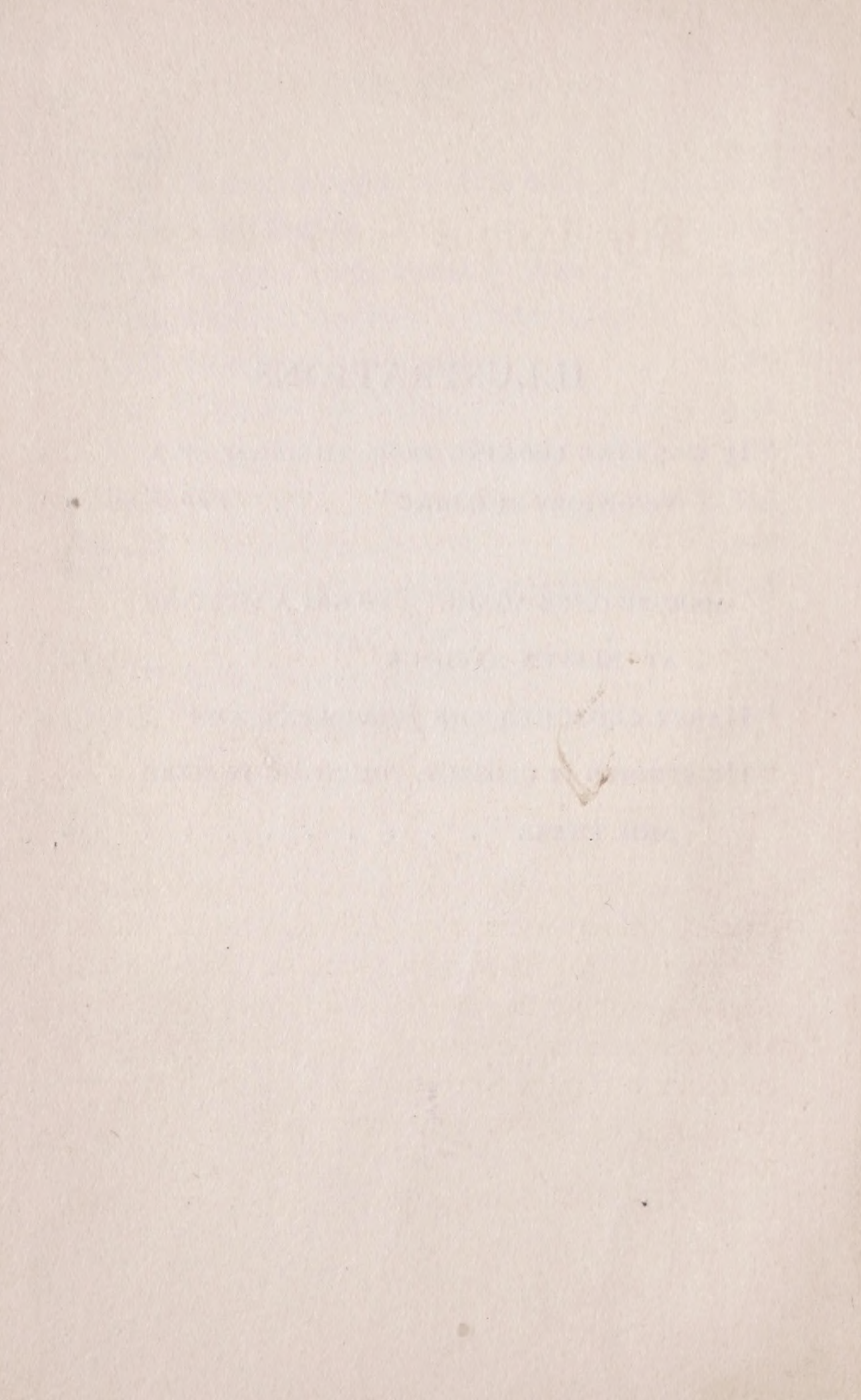
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For Uncle Sam, Boss

CHAPTER I

TO SHOW YOU WHO'S BOSS

“AND when it comes to enterprises, *I* can tell you one that would make the Panama Canal look like a—like a—like a—”

“Three strikes out, Kid!” laughed one of the little group of boys which surrounded the speaker. “What’s the enterprise?”

Everybody stared. An old gentleman who was walking along the deck followed by a porter with two suit-cases, slackened his pace and smiled at the boys as he passed. A young man of perhaps twenty-five or six thrust his hands into his trousers pockets, planted himself as near as politeness would allow, and waited. He had a little, bristling mustache and a way of pulling the edge of it into his mouth with his lower teeth and cocking his head sideways, which gave him a funny, expectant air, as if he were perfectly willing to hear the other side of the argument.

The boy who for the past fifteen minutes had

made himself the center of passing interest was about fourteen years old. He had a trim, compact little figure, clad in a complete suit of gray corduroy, with a corduroy hat to match. His trousers were buckled at his knees, and since his heavy, high-laced russet shoes almost reached the same point, there was visible not more than an inch or two of black stocking. He was leaning against the rail of the Panama Railroad Company's steamer *Ancon*, as she lay at her pier in New York, and it was evident to the young man with the bristling mustache that the other boys had been jollyng him and that he was perilously near the point of explosion. Below, on the pier, were the hurry and confusion which always attend the last minutes before departure.

"Go ahead, Kid," said a tall boy of about nineteen, who wore a long ulster and a Scotch plaid cap. "Speak slowly and distinctly, pausing after each word."

"All ready, Gordon?" said a red-haired boy. "One, two, three—"

"Well, I read in a book," said the boy in corduroy, "well, anyway, you know the earth used to be part of the moon—I mean the moon used to be part of the earth—and do you know what the Pacific Ocean is? Why, it's only just the hole made in the earth when the moon broke away, and it's gotten filled with water. Well, now, if you could some way bring the moon down and fit it in where it be-

longs—I don't say you could, but *if* you could, that would be the biggest enterprise—"

"We'll have to think that over, Kid," laughed the tall boy in the ulster, "and I'll see you about it as soon as I get back."

"You'll see me before you get back," retorted the younger boy. "Do you suppose I'm going to have you staying down there two or three years without seeing you? No, siree! I'm coming down next—next—summer."

"Coming alone?"

"I don't know yet, but if I have to come alone, I will."

"Talk about enterprise!" laughed one of the group. "You're enterprising enough, hey, Kid?"

"Sure, that's his middle name," said another.

"I may come down in an aeroplane, but more likely I'll come in a sailing vessel—a gallant bark."

The young man with the bristling mustache thrust his hands harder down into his pockets, eying the speaker and laughing silently.

"A sailor's life is the life for you, hey, Kid?" laughed a boy.

"You think the only thing down there is the Panama Canal. That's all I've heard about this last month, and I'm sick of dams and locks and things. I don't say the Panama Canal isn't all right, but I say there are other things down there—things

that date way back to the—the—what'ye call it—the dim past."

"What, for instance, Kid?"

"Oh, untold treasures—pieces of eight—ingots—and things like that."

"Ingots?" queried one boy.

"Sure, that's what the pirates always hid. Do you mean to tell me that Colonel Goethals is as great as Sir Henry Morgan? Why, Sir Henry Morgan sacked Porto Bello! He took all the gold—big long bars of it—from the Cathedral and buried it on the middle of the Isthmus where the—the foot of white man never trod, and it's there yet. I don't say the Panama Canal isn't all right, because it's a good idea; but what I say is, there are more important things than that down there. And I don't say Colonel Goethals isn't all right, either, only he isn't as great as a buccaneer, and neither is the President of the United States!"

The tall boy put his hand over the speaker's shoulder. "Kid," said he, in a low voice, "when you come down, I'll knock off work and we'll go hunting for buried treasure; we'll get those ingots, or whatever you call them, if we have to plow up the whole Isthmus."

"You'll know if you're going to find any, Harry," the younger boy said confidentially; "you might find some when you're digging the Canal, you know;

because if you're going to find buried treasure you dream of it three times running beforehand."

"I'll remember that, Kid."

"And there's another thing, too; I bet you don't know who Balboa was!"

"Sure," said the red-haired boy, "he discovered the Canal."

"He's the man that put the pan in Panama," said another.

"That shows how much you know!" said Gordon, contemptuously. "You don't even know he's dead!"

"I didn't know he was sick—honest, Kid."

"He discovered the Pacific Ocean," said Gordon.

"Oh, I remember him," exclaimed a boy. "I saw his picture in my history at school. He crossed the Isthmus through the jungle till he came out on a high hill and climbed a tree where he could see both oceans."

"Oh, look who's here!" called another boy, leaning over the rail. The others did the same. The young man with the bristling mustache, surmising that the show was about over, sauntered along the deck.

A taxi had rolled down the pier and come to a stop just abreast of the gangplank, and an elderly gentleman with white hair and white mustache was helping out a girl of about seventeen.

"Well, what—do—you—know—about—that?"

whispered one of the boys, incredulously. "It's Mr. Danforth! Harry, boy, you're certainly the teacher's pet!"

It was no wonder they were surprised. It was not an uncommon thing for men to come all the way from Boston, from Chicago, from Philadelphia, to see Mr. Danforth and to sit on a leather bench outside his private office and patiently await his convenience. When they succeeded in seeing him, they stated their business briefly, and went away. Yet here he was down at the pier, just to see this tall boy off for Panama. There must be some explanation for this. It will come in good time.

Harry Arnold, or Harry boy, as they all called him, half tauntingly, half affectionately, strolled over to the head of the companionway and waited. He was tall and slender and had a quiet, self-possessed, half-careless air. You would never have supposed that he was really the center and chief interest of this little group of which he formed a part, but indeed he was more than that—he is the hero of this story.

The girl came up first, flushed and radiant from the brisk morning air of November; an extremely pretty girl, with a merry smile which burst into a laugh as she set foot on the deck. Yet she seemed a trifle embarrassed, as if she were afraid they might wonder why she came, and it may have been that her ringing laugh was an effort to turn the fact

of her presence into a joke. She wore one of those heavy gray coats with enormous lapels, and a worsted Tam-o'-Shanter hat, and her brown eyes literally danced with pleasure as she greeted Harry.

"Just in time for the history lesson," said he. "Gordon's been giving a lecture on Balboa."

"Oh, I'm perfectly dreadful in history," she laughed.

"Well, he's been passing around some astronomy, too, and if you don't like that we have one or two choice pirates left. Hello, Mr. Danforth, it's awfully good of you and Marjorie to come."

"Not at all, my boy," said Mr. Danforth, grasping Harry's hand and putting his arm over the boy's shoulder as they joined the group. "Good morning, boys. I couldn't let you start off without having a last word with you, Harry. You see, I'm selfish in this matter. I don't care a snap about you." (The boys all laughed.) "But I've got myself into a pickle recommending you, and if you don't make good I'm responsible. So Marjorie and I appointed ourselves a committee of two to come aboard and—"

"I was coming to the city, anyway," interrupted the girl, "and I thought—we thought—it would be a splendid idea to come and show you— Do you know this newspaper has a picture of your boss?"

"Colonel Goethals?" Harry asked.

"No, not Colonel Goethals," she said, holding the paper behind her so that he could not take it.

"Oh, the President?"

"No, stupid, not the President! Don't you know who's your boss?"

"Gordon?" he hazarded, somewhat puzzled, and there was a general laugh.

"No, he won't be your boss any more for many a day," she answered.

"Unless he gets tired of it and comes home," suggested Winfield (otherwise, "Brick") Parks, he of the red hair.

"He *won't* get tired of it," said the girl, indignantly, "I *know* he won't!"

"I won't have to," laughed Harry. "Gordon says he's coming down. Come, let's see the picture of my boss, Marjorie."

"I won't," she laughed in his face, holding the paper tantalizingly behind her; "not till you promise you won't give up—not even if you get bitten by an alligator." Marjorie Danforth thought this was the principal misfortune which happened to people who went to the tropics, and she mentioned it as the most likely calamity which could befall Harry.

"Not unless he bites my head off," Harry said; "then I'd have to come home because I couldn't see to work."

"Would you think of leaving even if you were

stung by a tarantula?" she asked in tragic suspense.

"I expect to have all the tarantulas feeding out of my hand in a week."

"You're silly enough to try it; I know you'll have some kind of a freakish pet down there," she said, "that will worry your mother to death, just as it did when you let your arm be tattooed. But you wouldn't dream of coming home—of leaving?"

"I might dream of it," he laughed, "but I guess the dream wouldn't come true."

She looked straight at him in unconcealed confidence and admiration. Her father laid his hand again on the boy's shoulder and for a moment no one spoke. Then Mr. Danforth broke the silence. "Harry, my boy," he said, "come with me, I want to talk to you." No one ventured to follow except the girl, who clung to her father's disengaged arm, impulsive and expectant. Thus he walked between them as they sauntered along the deck, till they came to an unfrequented spot forward where there was a great upright pipe expanding funnel-like and emitting hot air. Against this the girl stood, warming herself, and her father took the paper from her.

"Harry," said he, "when you came up to the house last night to say good-by, I never thought I should see you this morning. But Marjorie and I happened to be breakfasting together (you know she's the early bird of the family), and suddenly she broke out, 'Oh, here's a picture of Harry's boss!'"

She held up the paper and sure enough, there he was, and it put an idea into my head—made me want to say something more to you, my boy. So here we are.”

“You’re too stupid to guess,” said Marjorie, as he opened the paper, “or else you’re just stubborn. So there!”

She pointed toward the open page, and there was a cartoon of the usual kind seen in the daily papers. There was Uncle Sam standing on a bit of shore extending his hand in hospitable gesture to a squadron of majestic battleships, on the nearest of which floated the German flag. It was simply intended to indicate pictorially our government’s welcome to the Kaiser’s fleet, which was visiting, or about to visit, the harbor of New York.

“Uncle Sam,” laughed Harry.

“Yes, my boy; what would we ever do without him? How could artists and such people picture the government? And I tell you what, Harry, the first man who drew this old fellow was a genius! Look at that smile!”

He held the paper before him, and they crowded near him, one on either side, looking at it over his shoulders. There stood old Uncle Sam, with his plug hat and his star-spangled-banner coat-tails, and his shrewd, homely, good-natured smile.

“Harry, I want you to think of him as your boss. Not the President—presidents come and go—

we'll have a new one, like enough, before this job is finished—but this old fellow is always here. Don't think of Congress as your boss or the Canal Commission or Colonel Goethals. Think of this old fellow. Look at that face, Harry, and try to think of it as a real, living face—the face of some one you know and love. Who does it look like?"

"Lincoln?" suggested Harry.

"Yes, I thought it did, a little—tall and raw-boned and ungainly—just in the general aspect, you know. Now I tell you what, my boy, this is what I mean. They say a fellow always works better for a man he likes than for a big company, and I've found that out. I've got several thousand people working for me, Harry, and I try to keep them from thinking that they work for this railroad or that railroad. That's why I go round the country—see the gangs at work, talk to them, get acquainted with them, and try to make them like me.

"Now, my boy, if you go down there with the idea that you're working for the War Department, you might get it into your head that the War Department was wrong in some way or wasn't treating you fair, and you might—I don't say you *would*—but you *might* be tempted to leave or shirk or something of that kind. Just you settle it in your mind that you're working for this old fellow—see? Think of that kind, shrewd, genial, generous face. Think

of that if you get discouraged or homesick or dissatisfied. Think of him as your friend."

He paused, but Harry said nothing.

"Does he look as if he'd treat you fair? He's given you a good job, my boy—you've got the appointment in your pocket. He's going to give you a place to sleep. He's going to furnish you with better food and cheaper than any hotel or restaurant down there thinks of doing. He's taken that old bandanna handkerchief of his and shooed all the mosquitoes off the Isthmus, and cleaned it up like a Dutch housewife. Don't you listen to any talk against him. He's your friend, my boy. Don't give him just what he pays for and no more—remember, he's a close relation, Harry, he's your uncle. Always remember this grand old fellow smiling at you, believing in you, trusting you, depending on you."

He stopped short, still holding the paper open before them. The girl looked covertly across her father's shoulder at Harry, but the boy's eyes were riveted upon the sheet.

"I don't know whether you quite understand me, Harry," said Mr. Danforth, as he folded up the paper; "but I thought it was a good idea of Marjorie's."

"I think I do, sir," said Harry.

"I guess you do, my boy. Now, good-by once again; we're going right down these steps here. I've got a meeting at eleven o'clock. You go



" 'GOOD-BY ONCE AGAIN. I'VE GOT A MEETING AT ELEVEN O'CLOCK.' "

back and spend the rest of your time with the boys."

He grasped Harry's hand, and the boy looked into the kindly, wrinkled face of the man whom he had to thank for his start in life. "Good-by, Mr. Danforth," said he, with just the touch of a tremor in his voice. "Good-by, Marjorie."

"Isn't it all true?" she said excitedly, as she took his hand.

"What your father was saying? Yes, it's all true."

"And you won't be a what-do-you-call-it?"

"No, I won't be a what-do-you-call-it."

"I mean a—oh, what is it you call a person who gives up?"

"I know, Marjorie; no, I don't think I'll be that."

"But, of course, you'll *want* to come back *some-time*, when it's all over, won't you?"

"Yes, then I'll come marching home again, hurrah."

"Silly!"

It was a long hand-shake; Mr. Danforth was halfway down the steps when it ended. Harry walked slowly aft, keeping near the rail, and presently saw them emerge from the gangway and enter the taxi.

"He'll make good," said Mr. Danforth, cheerily,

as they seated themselves. "I don't believe he'll get discouraged, do you?"

"Don't you think he looks *splendid* in that big ulster?" said she.

Which was rather an odd way to answer her father's question.

CHAPTER II

“ALL ASHORE THAT’S GOING ASHORE!”

HARRY walked along the deck toward the group of boys he had left. There was his friend and stanch champion, Gordon Lord, holding forth volubly on the subject of his intended visit to Panama. Of course, none of them took him seriously; he was only fourteen, and what could he do at the Isthmus? But they liked to hear him talk just the same. It gave Harry just a touch of homesickness to see these friends laughing and chatting together and to realize that they would soon be going back on the one-twenty to the pleasant New Jersey suburb which he would not see again for two years.

They were held together in comradeship by a stronger tie than that which commonly holds boys in friendship, for they were all scouts together and were members of the First Oakwood Troop, of Oakwood, New Jersey. They had camped together, stalked and tracked together, and now the boy of whom they were proudest was leaving them. And who could take the place of Harry Arnold? Well, at least, G. Lord, mascot and youngest “Beaver” of them all, was left.

Harry smiled at the enthusiastic little fellow, who was excitedly announcing his program for visiting the Isthmus, and quietly joined the listeners. There came a day, not so many months later, when he thought wistfully of this morning of his departure; when he smiled to think how true was Marjorie Danforth's taunting prophecy that he would "have some freakish pet down there," and when he began to realize what the fulfilment of her girlish augury would mean. And there came a day when he thought of Gordon standing there at the steamer's rail, a trim, natty little figure in his belted corduroy suit, with his brown face and enthusiastic brown eyes. And on that dreadful day there came to him the thought that he would never see Gordon again. But all that is in the future, and let us not borrow trouble. It is one of the storms our narrative must pass through.

"They've got some dandy Indians down there," Gordon was saying; "San Blas, they call them, and they've never been civilized. Cracky, I hope they never will be—anyway, not till after I've been there. But I'm afraid they'll all be civilized now on account of the Canal."

"I'll promise not to civilize a single one of them, Kid," said Harry.

"Hello, Harry boy," said Roy Carpenter, one of the patrol leaders; "you come so blamed quiet; where's—"

"Gone," said Harry. "Go on, Kid, tell us some more about Balboa; there isn't much time left."

"I'll bet I can tell you some things about him G. Lord doesn't know," put in Brick Parks.

"Very well, Winfield," said Howard Brent; "stand in the middle of the aisle, and don't touch the desk. Proceed."

"Well, you fellows think the U. S. Battleship *Oregon* will be the first ship to cross the Isthmus. That's what the papers say, but I can tell you that Balboa was the man that invented picture puzzles—so there!"

"What's that got to do with it?" demanded Gordon.

"That's history, lesson twenty-two, page forty-seven, beginning with the first paragraph."

"Oh, let up—what are you giving us?"

"Balboa wanted to launch three ships in the Pacific Ocean, so he took them across the Isthmus in pieces, little pieces, and put them together when he got them over to the west shore. Those three ships were the first picture puzzles and the first boats to cross the Isthmus."

"Wrong as usual," said Roy Carpenter. "It's true he took them over and put them in the Pacific Ocean that way, but the Pacific Ocean isn't west down there, it's east."

"You're crazy!" shouted Gordon. "The Pacific Ocean is west—you learn that in the third grade."

You all think you can jolly me, don't you? And that's a crazy thing about the ships, too. When you go from the Atlantic to the Pacific, you go west. Didn't Columbus sail west? Well, then! You make me tired! You're crazy!"

"Guess it's the Isthmus that's crazy, Kid," said Harry, coming to the rescue. "It does a kind of loop-the-loop; the sun rises out of the Pacific down there. I suppose it's so rattled it doesn't know where to rise half the time. It's a freakish place. I'm not going to bother my head about it, and don't you. It makes you feel kind of funny to look at a government map of the Canal Zone and see the Atlantic end on the left and the Pacific end on the right. It's a queer place; they have rain storms six months long, and the people carry everything they own on their heads. Then along comes a gang of masons and they put up a dam, and that changes a lot of hills into islands. Presto! Then along comes somebody else, some engineer, and he says, 'I don't just like this river here, it's in the way; just help me move it over a little,' and over she goes!"

Gordon's eyes were wide with astonishment. For a moment he was quiet—an unusual thing. His credulity was taxed to the uttermost. Then came the last straw to break the camel's back, a strange voice, brisk and matter-of-fact, and Gordon riveted his eyes upon the speaker, drinking in every word. It

was the young man with the bristling mustache. He had sauntered quietly over to them, his hands still in his trousers pockets, and he threw his head back and cocked it sideways, fixing Gordon with a whimsical, yet businesslike, air.

"I was wondering if you ever heard of the strange way your friend Balboa set sail for Panama? No? Well, that was the queerest thing of all. He was packed in a barrel."

Gordon was so accustomed to being "jollied" that he was on the alert with this stranger who had addressed him in a way of business confidence, as one man may speak to another.

"Y-e-e-s, he was!" said he.

"Sure as you live," said the stranger. "I just thought as long as you were on the subject of freakishness, I'd drop in my little mite."

"I told you it was a queer place," laughed Harry.

"Why, you'll be a regular Alice-in-Wonderland," said the stranger, turning suddenly upon him.

"Yes," Harry laughed, "if the birds and beasts could only talk."

"They can," the stranger promptly retorted; "some of them. The Panama parrots just monopolize the conversation; you can't get a word in edgewise."

"What'd'e go in a barrel for?" Gordon asked, eying the stranger with a look of contemptuous

suspicion which did not seem to disconcert its object in the least.

"What for? Well, between you and me he owed a lot of money and his creditors were after him. He lived in Haiti, you know, and owed everybody, big sums for tires, gasoline, and one thing or another at every garage on the island. So poor he couldn't even pay his respects—"

"Y-e-e-s!" sneered Gordon.

"So he had himself put in a barrel and rolled on board. His creditors went down and searched the ship for him, but it was no use. He just winked his eye through the bung-hole, and yo-ho, my lads, a life on the ocean wave for him! He wasn't discovered. All the discovering was done by him later. You'll have to hunt him up—hunt him up in the books, I mean," he added, turning suddenly to Harry. "Why, he—"

"Conne, Conne, Mr. Conne," piped a voice. "Any one by the name of Carleton Conne?"

"Right here, my son," said the young man, wheeling about and stopping a messenger boy. He did not seem to be at all surprised at receiving a letter here on shipboard. On the contrary, he opened it quite blandly, then with one hand thrust deep into his trousers pocket he held the paper almost at arm's length with the other, drew the edge of his mustache between his teeth, and contemplated the note as if it were a pretty picture on

which he had been asked to give a candid opinion. He had wheeled about so that his back was toward Gordon, and as the note was written in a large, bold hand the words were plainly visible. Before Gordon realized what he was doing, and without intending to read it, he had become aware of its contents.

He saw many things which others did not see, he was nothing if not wide-awake and observant, but of all the things he had ever seen in his life, and of all the strange things he had heard that very morning, this letter was the most astonishing. It read:

Just a last word. Better wait till you are well out at sea. Strangling would be best, but anyway the struggle should be short. How does Spanish gold strike you? Good luck.

There was a signature scrawled which Gordon did not make out. Mr. Carleton Conne, deliberately, heartlessly, folded this appalling missive, put it in his pocket, and saying, "Well, good-by, boys," sauntered away.

For a minute, Gordon was too aghast to speak. Then he said tremblingly: "That man is going to kill somebody! Do you know what that letter said? It said strangling would be the best way. There's going to be murder, Harry; it's got something to do

with Spanish gold—it said so. It said the struggle must be short—I saw it. Harry, that man is a deep-dyed villain!”

“Oh, I guess not, Kid,” laughed Harry. “You’ve got Spanish gold on the brain.”

“Harry, I tell you I saw it! You watch that man—he’s a villain! I knew it the minute I saw him. Both his names begin with the same letter, too, and that’s a sign, because you know Roger Rondout—in—in Henty. Harry, you watch that man. You may have a chance to be a hero!”

The laughter of the boys drowned his excited words. What more he might have said, I do not know, for just then there came along the deck that official whose cheerful duty it is to separate friends. On he came, heartless and heedless, putting an end to many a pleasant chat as he passed, and leaving here and there a tear-filled eye, or a fond embrace in his path of ruin.

“All ashore that’s going ashore!” he shouted. “Last call, all ashore that’s going ashore!”

“Good-by, Harry, old boy, let’s hear from you.” “Good-by—good-by, old man!” “Yes, sure I’ll write.” “So long.” “Good luck to you!” “You’ll be back before you know it.” “Oh, but we’ll miss you!” A dozen voices spoke, one upon the other and all together in cordial, affectionate confusion.

“Good-by, good-by—good-by, Kid, old boy,” said

Harry, extending both his hands here and there among them.

“ All ashore that’s going ashore ! ”

And the next thing Harry Arnold knew, he was looking over the rail at the party of boys who stood on the pier. Close by a couple of longshoremen were pulling up a mammoth hempen rope which had been let go from somewhere along the great black towering hull beneath him. As he looked, one of the boys raised his arm level with his forehead, the little finger held down with the thumb, the three other fingers standing upright. The others promptly followed his example.

It was the full salute of the Scouts ; not the salute given in the ordinary intercourse of troop with troop, or patrol with patrol, or from one scout to another, for that is the half salute and only shoulder high. But this was the salute they might have given “ Black Wolf ” himself, or their own scout-master. Once before, when they had him where he was powerless, they had voluntarily given the full salute to Harry. That was on the stage of the Town Hall in Oakwood when the prizes were awarded after a summer of camping and adventure. They had done it then, unordered, in the spontaneous impulse of their unbounded regard for the boy whom they were proud to count their friend. He had earned the full salute then. Will he earn it now ?

And his adventures? Whether they lead him into as many devious and dangerous ways as his adventures of the past summer, and whether he acquit himself as resourcefully, as honorably, as he did then; and whether he come forth stronger and more manly for what he has learned and suffered and been through—that shall be for you to say.

CHAPTER III

WHILE THE HERO'S BACK IS TURNED

Now that Master Gordon Lord is effectually silenced, for the time being, at least, and the excitement of departure is over, let us steal quietly away from the boy who is leaning over the steamer's rail indulging in a daydream, while I make you more particularly acquainted with him. If just the faintest touch of homesickness tinges his thoughts as he watches the majestic goddess on her lofty pedestal receding across the bay, and thinks of the familiar faces (and for all I know, of the one exceptionally pretty face) which he does not expect to see again for many a moon, why, that is all the more reason why we should leave him to himself.

You have heard of boys starting gayly off to the farthest ends of the earth on the most hazardous adventures without so much as a pang at leaving home, but Harry was not that kind of boy. Indeed, you may as well know at the very beginning that, fond of adventure as he was and proficient in all the woodcraft arts, there was a little vein of gentleness running in him which often got in his way and

embarrassed him, but which nevertheless endeared him to everybody. We are all agreed that actions speak louder than words, and doubtless you are more curious to know what he is going to do than what his friends think of him. Also it may be that you have already met him among other scenes. At all events a word or two will not be amiss. If you are to hear anything in his favor you will have to hear it from me, for you will certainly never hear it from him.

When the Boy Scout movement started, he was active in forming the Oakwood troop. That honor was generally conceded to Dr. Brent, a young physician of that pleasant suburb, and indeed it was he who had inspired the thought and become the troop's scoutmaster; but Harry Arnold had been his right-hand man. He had talked with this boy and that, given them Scout literature to read, and mustered most of them in, one by one.

He had enlisted "Brick" Parks ("His head will do for a camp-fire," he had told the Doctor); he had brought in Matthew Reed (troop jester), and he had fired Roy Carpenter with enthusiasm. These two became the leaders of the two patrols, Harry of the "Beavers," Roy of the "Hawks"; but lately Harry had become rather more than this, he had grown to be a sort of assistant scoutmaster to Dr. Brent.

But, greatest of all, he had discovered Gordon

Lord. There was a discovery to put Columbus and Balboa and all the rest in the shade! One day he was walking past the fine new bungalow which had lately been finished and occupied, up the road a little way from the big, old-fashioned Arnold place, when he became aware of a lively youngster swinging on a gate.

"Hello, Kid," said Harry, cheerily.

"Hello, yourself," said the smaller boy. "You live in that big house down there?"

"Surest thing you know," said Harry. "What's that you've got?"

"An onion."

"An onion?"

"That's what I said."

"What're you going to do with it?"

"Write a letter."

"*What?*"

"Write a letter! You don't know much about secret ciphers and things, I guess, do you?"

"'Fraid not; but you don't think that's a bottle of ink, do you?" said Harry.

"That's just what it is—invisible ink. It's good to use if you're a spy. If Nathan Hale had used it, he wouldn't have been hung. You jab your pen into it and write with the juice. It's invisible—can't see a word. Then when you want to read it, heat it over the stove or the radiator and the writing will show up. Your name's Arnold, isn't it?"

“Correct,” said Harry. “Come with me—you’ll do.”

It required no persuasion. G. Lord and his onion were taken forthwith to Dr. Brent’s and the future mascot of the Beavers was presented.

“Doctor,” said Harry, “here is the only original Boy Scout, guaranteed; if not satisfactory you get your money back. Tell him about the invisible writing, Kid.”

“That’s nothing,” said Gordon, encouraged; “do you know how to make a candlestick out of a clothes-pin?”

Of course they did not let G. Lord slip through their fingers, and the discovery raised Harry to local fame. G. Lord himself discovered many things. He seldom went out without picking up dimes, pennies, buckles, marbles, pencils, and other various odds and ends. But Harry Arnold had discovered G. Lord, and G. Lord had become the close friend, the champion, the worshiper of Harry Arnold.

It was while the two patrols with Dr. Brent were camping in the Adirondacks that Harry met the Danforths, who had later moved to Oakwood. They had a summer place on the shore of Lake Champlain, and it was there that Harry had rescued Mr. Danforth’s little son from drowning. That is all part of another story and has no business here except to explain Mr. Danforth’s interest in Harry and his desire to help the boy along. He had

admired Harry's character, and had been impressed with his modesty and his manliness to such a degree that on the boy's refusal of a reward for the rescue, what did Mr. Danforth do but turn around and erect a camping pavilion on Lake Champlain which he gave to the Boy Scouts of America with the provision that it should be called the Arnold Pavilion. Sometime in the future, when the Adirondack woods are fragrant and the vines have grown up over the beautiful camping shack, we may visit it and see the rustic fireplace and the motto which Marjorie Danforth selected to be graven on a rustic board below the massive chimney shelf. G. Lord was in that conspiracy—but at present, we are going south.

Harry's ambition was to become a civil engineer. He had spent the past year in study, and when he had received the practical experience which his work on the Canal would give him, he was to enter college and eventually have a place on the engineering force associated with Mr. Danforth in his vast railroad interests. He had a mother and father and a young sister, but they were at present traveling abroad.

He was a quiet boy and very thoughtful. With all his fondness for camping and his enthusiasm for outdoor life, there was just a little touch of the recluse in him which the boys recognized and respected. He was fond of wandering off alone at times, and nature, the woods and water, were as much his companions as the other boys. He never

made any boast of his prowess, nor of his other virtues. For instance, he would never shoot an animal. "Don't believe I could hit one," he would say, and he would have you think that was the reason. But, of course, the boys knew better. He was the best shot in the troop. He could shoot an arrow from an Indian bow with undeviating aim. His reason for not wanting to do a thing that was wrong or mean or cruel was, "I don't see any fun in that." And you could not get any more out of him.

"Harry boy has never caused me any worry, I will say that much," Mrs. Arnold would tell you, and then "Harry boy" would say, "Oh, yes, I have, mother," and tell you of the time when she was quite annoyed and frantic with anxiety, the time he had allowed his arm to be tattooed by a wandering Indian basket maker. He had a little weakness for freakish things like that, and I dare say his mother may possibly have worried more than she admitted, first and last, but it was because he was over venturesome, never for any other reason.

It was a big, old, rambling house in which the Arnolds lived, a relic of the days when Oakwood was not the home of commuters, and its large, square rooms, the dining room with its polished rafters, the spacious attic, had a fascination for the boys who came and went, and tramped up and down the wide stair to and from Harry's room, as if the

place were their own home. And what a place that attic was on rainy days!

But Harry's room was the delightful spot of the fine old mansion, or so the boys thought. There was a window seat where they used to loll, and where his canoe cushions lay when not in requisition on the river. One of these was of buckskin with Indian fringe around the edge, and had H. A. embroidered in one corner. I dare say some one made him that one. There was a pipe rack with a row of holes to accommodate pipes; but this rack served a different purpose, for it held a row of oarlocks and resting across them or in them were several choice fishing-rods. There was no end of books—on the mantel, in cases, on the couch, and a row of them had even trespassed into the curio cabinet where Harry kept his trophies and curiosities which were the perpetual delight of Gordon Lord. There was a whale's tooth carved by an old sailor, there were Indian arrowheads, there was the sword his grandfather had worn at Gettysburg and the medals he himself had received at the hands of the Boy Scouts. And standing in the corners were canoe paddles which looked all alike to the boys but each of which had some quality of its own, known only to Harry.

They would spend whole afternoons in this fascinating room, and when they all came tramping down the stairs, as likely as not they would

encounter Mrs. Arnold in the great hall, where, in the winter, a roaring fire always blazed on the open hearth. She was very sweet and old-fashioned and gentle.

"You will be back for dinner, won't you, Harry boy?" she would very likely ask, and Harry would put his arm around her neck and say, "Yes" or "No," as the case might be, and kiss her before leaving. Then, when he was gone she would often turn to Margaret, Harry's sister, and say, "I hope he will always do that; I'm always afraid when the boys are with him that he won't—that he'll get to think it's old-fashioned."

"What, for him to kiss his mother? I don't see anything old-fashioned in that—goodness! And I know *he* never will."

"Well," Mrs. Arnold would say, as if reassured by the girl's confidence, "I hope they won't think he's a 'Willie boy.'"

"I don't think there's much danger, mother," the girl would laugh.

"Well," Mrs. Arnold would say again, "I hope they won't keep him up at the Danforths' to supper."

But they usually did for all that.

As the liner moved down the middle of the river a humble ferryboat paused respectfully in its splashing progress for the big ship to pass. It looked

very commonplace from Harry's vantage point at the steamer's rail, plying its monotonous way across the river, and the people who herded at the accordion fence on its deck seemed poor wretches with never exploit or adventure to beguile their humdrum lives. That is the way things and people seem when you look down upon them from the rail of a liner which is to take you to Panama.

It was not till the familiar sights of the harbor were indistinguishable that Harry's gaze wandered out over the ocean and his thoughts turned unhindered to the new, strange life that was opening before him. Not till then could he think of the future, or at least, not till then did it seem real to him.

He was actually going to work on the Panama Canal. He was to have a hand in vanquishing those obstacles which had baffled and confounded Columbus and sent him home to Spain a disappointed and broken man. He knew this mighty work was going to take its place among the wonders of the world. And he was going to help. He had seen pictures of it, showing the progress of work here and there, the Culebra Cut, the great steam-shovels, the persistent drills perched here and there like eagles on cliff and crag, eating their way relentlessly into the stubborn rock. And he had wondered how those little cars could ever carry away a sufficient part of the continent to leave a hole halfway across.

Then he had thought of what he once heard about the little hair-spring wheel in a watch—how it travels eleven miles a day, simply by keeping right at it, continually, ceaselessly. Yet it had seemed to him incredible that they could ever get this great task finished. There was so much of it that it seemed hopeless. And, somehow or other, the “big ditch” had taken its place in his imagination along with all the other things he had heard about the torrid zone, and had become a part of that land of enchantment. And now he was going there.

To Harry, the very word “tropics” had always suggested something very far away and unreal, palm trees, rubber plants, cockatoos, impenetrable thickets, deadly swamps, mammoth spiders, and all sorts of venomous and uncanny life. He thought of the pictures he had seen of tropical scenes, with all the trees drooping and dripping, with monkeys hanging by their tails or dropping cocoanuts on the heads of tapirs and ant-eaters, and strange-looking birds eating bananas right off the trees.

Some one came and leaned over the rail close beside him. It was Mr. Carleton Conne.

“Well,” said he, “so you’re going down to dig in the sand with Uncle Sam, hey?”

Harry started out of his preoccupation and laughed. “Yes,” said he, “but I haven’t got my little pail and shovel along.”

“You’ll see shovels enough when you get down

there; and it's something like digging in the sand, too. It's a regular Sunday School picnic!"

"You've been there?" Harry asked.

"There last year, but there was nothing doing for me on account of the rain. I got tired waiting for it to hold up and came home. We'll have a dry spell down there pretty quick now."

Harry wanted to ask Mr. Conne his business, but he thought of the mysterious letter and refrained.

"I had an idea it meant pretty hard work; I didn't suppose it was much like a picnic," he said.

"No? Well, of course, anybody who goes down there with the idea that it's an afternoon tea has a big surprise coming to him. It's work, work, work, and then a little more, but they all seem to like it. The Old Man's got them hypnotized."

"Uncle—er, you mean Colonel Goethals?" Harry asked.

"That's him. G. W."

"They call him the Old Man?"

"That's what they do."

"Does he know it?"

"Know it? Of course he knows it—he knows everything. Don't you go down there with the idea you can fool the Old Man."

"He's all right, is he?" queried Harry.

"He is—with something left over."

"White as snow?" Harry encouraged, more to draw out Mr. Conne than for any other reason.

"Well, if not, he's the lightest shade of gray you ever saw. George Washington was dark blue compared to him. He's as straight as the Isthmus is crooked. Don't miss the Old Man, my boy; he's one of the sights."

"And they all like their work?" said Harry.

"They're daft on the subject. They break records forty-'leven times a day. You'll hear about it. Why, the minute you set foot in Culebra, up will come some fellow and he'll say, 'How many cubic yards do you think we turned over yesterday?' And you'll say, 'Give it up,' and he'll say, 'Nine hundred and fifty-two.' Then along comes another man and he'll say, 'Have you heard what 78 did yesterday? Well, we beat it by eighty-four cubic yards.' Why, you'd think they all had an interest in it!"

"Haven't they?" Harry asked.

"Why, yes, come to think of it; I suppose that Canal belongs to you and me and the boys, doesn't it?"

"That's the idea," said Harry.

"And then you want to look out for another kind of fellow down there. Some of them are so interested and crazy about the Canal that they're afraid you won't appreciate it, and they try to startle you. Don't you be surprised at anything you hear. They'll buttonhole you as soon as you get on shore. You'll meet some fellow who'll say, 'Do you know

how much cement there is in the Gatun Dam?' And you'll say, 'No, how much cement is there in the Gatun Dam?' And then he'll tell you that if you take all the cement from the streets of Chicago and Boston and New York and London and Paris and Philadelphia and a few other places, you'd have just about enough to build one sixteenth part of the Gatun Dam. And if that doesn't stagger you, he's got another right on the tip of his tongue. Pretty soon you'll go to the Ancon Hospital with brain fever from trying to comprehend it all. You see, the job's too big; it doesn't fit in with our notion of things, and it's hard work to make people see it. So everybody has a little stock of parables and posers and things ready for you.—Too bad the little fellow couldn't come along," he added, as a sudden thought. "I'd give a mess o' pottage to see him watch a ship climb upstairs when the Gatun locks are finished."

"Yes," laughed Harry. "He's our troop mascot."

"Scouts, eh?"

"Yes, Oakwood, New Jersey."

"Well, they've got a wide-awake lot of them down on the Isthmus."

"So?" asked Harry, in surprise.

"Yes, *sir*; library, Y. M. C. A., club—all the delicacies of the season. But there's one thing I don't understand about those Scouts," he added,

with a funny, quizzical air. "They've got Theodore Roosevelt for Honorary Vice-President, and one of their principal rules is never to shoot an animal for pleasure.—I guess it's going to blow up some."

In token of this apprehension he turned up the collar of his overcoat, and saying that he would see Harry later, he sauntered along the deck, leaving the leader of the Beaver Patrol to digest the little morsel which he had facetiously offered regarding the Scouts.

Harry did not know what to think of Mr. Conne. Whatever his business was, he certainly was in the habit of keeping his eyes and ears open. He seemed to be familiar with history. Harry knew that what he had told Gordon about Balboa was true, at least as far as the barrel episode was concerned; and he even knew enough about the Boy Scouts to poke a little fun at them. The trouble was that everything he said was uttered in such a whimsical, airy way and with such offhand familiarity that it was hard to believe he entertained a serious appreciation of anything. He had a way of giving a ridiculous twirl to everything he said. It amused Harry to hear him talk, but he did not quite know whether he liked him or not.

He watched Mr. Conne as he sauntered along the deck. He had a way of swinging his legs this way and that and walking in a kind of aimless fashion. Yet strangely enough, perhaps, the im-

pression which forced itself upon Harry's scout mind was that he could afford to walk with this vacillating gait and take his time and look casually on all things, and talk of them with intimate freedom, because, away down in his own nature, he was perfectly sure of himself, so sure that he did not have to give any evidence of it in his demeanor.

I speak of the impression on Harry's scout mind because the Scouts are supposed to study people and judge them, more or less, by the little signs which the generality of boys do not notice. It was this phase of scouting (deduction, so-called) which of late had interested Harry particularly, and his enthusiasm had been kindled by the recent visit to America of the great Scout of Scouts, the hero of the Boer War, General Baden-Powell. For him Harry entertained an unbounded admiration. Along with a few other fortunate Scouts, he and Roy Carpenter, as patrol leaders, had availed themselves of a much prized invitation to meet the General one Saturday. I suspect the invitation resulted from some account of Harry's exploits which had reached headquarters, but do not mention it to him that I told you.

A trifling incident had occurred that day which sent Harry home resolved to read again the chapter in the English Scout Manual which treats of deduction. The General was at headquarters with a crowd of Scouts and scoutmasters about him, laughing and

listening to what they were saying. It was a gala day for many Scouts. Harry was known at headquarters, and he was promptly presented to the Chief Scout.

"They've all been telling me of their good turns," the General said cheerily, shaking his hand. "They do them early here in the States, it seems."

"I'm afraid I haven't done mine yet, sir," said Harry, "unless giving my seat to a lady in the Broadway car will do—until I get a chance at something better."

"Came down from way uptown, eh?" said the General.

Harry looked surprised. "Ye-es; er, why?" he blurted.

"Else you wouldn't have had any seat to give," the General laughed.

It was a small thing; but here was a man who had been in the country just three days, and his mind was ready and active and observant and retentive enough, among the multiplicity of things he had to remember, to know that if a boy had a seat in a Broadway car in the morning, he very likely got on near where the car started. He remembered reading that the General could determine whether a man was mean or extravagant or reckless by his gait, and he longed to become proficient in such a fascinating and useful art.

So now he watched Mr. Carleton Conne with re-

doubled interest and curiosity. That individual in his rambling progress had reached a point where the glow streamed through one of the saloon windows, and he paused to glance within. He jerked his head back in that queer, matter-of-fact way and cocked it sideways, just as he had looked at Gordon. In the light from the window Harry could see how his lips were drawn tightly along the edges of his gums showing all his teeth, in that way that somehow suggests resolution.

"I wonder who that reminds me of," he thought, as Mr. Conne sauntered on and disappeared. Then, suddenly, it came jumping into his head: "Why, the very man he was speaking of—Roosevelt!"

He thought how quickly General Baden-Powell would have sized up this puzzling stranger. But the General was not on hand, so Harry did the best he could. He decided that Mr. Carleton Conne might possibly be bad, and might very likely be good, but that, at all events, he was not weak. He thought a little of the mysterious letter which had so shocked Gordon, but he decided that it must have been perverted out of its proper meaning by Gordon's vivid and romantic imagination. Nevertheless, he could not quite forget it. He concluded that Mr. Carleton Conne was the kind of person who, if he made up his mind to do a thing, would do it. So the only question remaining was what kind of things Mr. Carleton Conne usually made up his mind to do.

Harry did not see him again that night. After supper he took a constitutional on deck, whence the wind and cold had driven most of the passengers indoors.

"Wonder where he is?" he mused. Then, thinking of Gordon, he smiled and said, "Probably in his stateroom planning murder or counting Spanish gold."

CHAPTER IV

SOME HISTORY AND A LITTLE TRAGEDY

THE wind was blowing a gale as Harry strolled along the deck, and he turned up the collar of his ulster and pulled his cap down tight. He was fond of blustering weather, and it gave him a certain pleasure to be here amidst it, to feel the spray and to be conscious of the great ship, heedless of it all, going straight about her business.

Soon he wandered indoors and down a passage, where he presently heard the steady click of the wireless. A few yards ahead a stout gentleman stood at a lighted doorway where there was a rail and a counter. As Harry approached, he could see the wireless operator sitting on a stool in his little room with his feet on a trunk, and on the apparatus table beside him a sandwich with one symmetrical, semicircular bite taken out of it.

"You change me two dollar," the stout gentleman said to Harry. Like most foreigners, he did not raise his voice at the end of the sentence and Harry did not know whether it was a question or a demand.

"I guess I can," said he.

"Yes, yes, yes," the stranger jerked out excitedly. The wireless operator cast a weary look out at Harry, while his fingers lingered about one of the apparatus keys on the table. He moved it gently up and down, as one toys with a lead pencil while talking, and smiled slightly; but whether it was from amusement at the stranger or at something which had come to him out of the blustering night, Harry could not make out.

The foreigner wore a high beaver hat and an overcoat with a heavy fur collar. He wore also a pair of spectacles which sat crookedly on his nose, and a vest of gorgeous pattern with two rows of buttons that looked like real agates. His face, which was very fat and beefy, was much in need of shaving. His two little brown eyes looked like small Croton alleys, and the odd fancy occurred to Harry that if he could clip off one of the real agate buttons for a shooter he could pop those Crotons out of the ring in short order. But marbles were not in season. So he took out his brand-new wallet, in which he had a hundred dollars in brand-new bills, and handed two ones to the stranger.

"Yes, yes, yes," said he, in rapid satisfaction which doubtless was intended also to include his thanks. At all events, it was all the thanks Harry got, for as soon as he had settled with the operator the man waddled off down the passage.

"Italian?" Harry queried.

The operator shrugged his shoulders and glanced at the despatch, but if its signature gave him any hint, he did not convey it to Harry. He had still one hand upon his instrument and was more attentive to it than before; so Harry wandered out on deck again, putting the two-dollar bill in his pocket, for it seemed hardly a proper associate for the crisp, unwrinkled company in his wallet. Yet it served its turn for all that.

He staggered along the deck, blown hither and thither by the wind, and stumbling from the movement of the vessel. He passed two men in heavy coats who were talking excitedly in the shelter of a passage. Harry fancied that one of them was Mr. Conne, but it was too dark to be certain.

"It will have to be settled on this trip, once for all; I'm not afraid," one of the men was saying, as Harry passed.

The wind urged him on and presently he side-stepped into a passage and against a door. At first he thought it was locked, but it was only the force of the wind that kept it shut. He wrenched it open, and it closed behind him with a bang as he entered the smoking room, where several men sat about in big leather chairs, chatting.

"Too brisk for you, my boy?" said an old gentleman, cheerily. It was the same man who had paused on deck and smiled at the boys.

"It's pretty windy, sir," said Harry, sitting down in a corner as the conversation continued.

"You smoke?" said a younger man, putting his hand to his vest pocket.

"No, sir."

"Well, it's just as well," he said; "glad to hear it. Guess you haven't got your growth yet, have you?"

"Yes, I think I have," said Harry.

"How tall are you?"

"Five feet, ten and a half."

"I believe you are," said the man, looking him over, the while he took a comforting whiff of his cigar. "You take my advice and don't smoke till you're thirty. Make a resolution."

"I don't need to," said Harry. "I'm a scout and we don't smoke."

"Good for you," said the man, pleasantly. "What's that motto you fellows have?"

"'Be prepared'?" queried Harry.

"Yes; it's a good one, too. We were just talking about Captain Clarke and the *Oregon*. He was prepared."

"I'd like to hear more about that," said Harry. "It seems to be mixed up with the Panama Canal some way."

The young man looked at him critically but pleasantly, and the old gentleman (whom the others called Mr. Wentworth) looked at him, too.

"How old are you, my boy?" said another man.

“Nineteen, sir.”

“So?”

There was something about Harry that men liked. They liked to have him about; they were always ready to talk to him, and sometimes would encourage him to talk and draw him out. Yet he was always quiet in their company and more inclined to listen than to talk.

“Let’s see,” said the gentleman who had done most of the talking; “nineteen, eh? You were about four years old when we whipped Spain.”

“Wasn’t a whipping,” said another man; “it was more of a spanking.”

“Yes, you were a mere baby when Captain Clarke came around the Horn. But there’s a lesson in that, my boy. There he was around at San Francisco when the war broke out. They ordered him to join the fleet in the West Indies. I think he started the same day he got orders—within three hours, wasn’t it? Well, anyway, he was prepared—that’s the point. And that’s what started everybody talking about a canal. He had to go way round Cape Horn, nearly fourteen thousand miles. And he did it—steamed all the way, full speed, and arrived in fighting trim, by the powers! I remember well the sensation it caused. She came plowing up the coast of South America and finally they sighted her—a mass of gray iron and black smoke, pushing up through the Caribbean Sea. And every single man

was at his post. Every gunner stood ready with his sleeves up when she steamed in among the Atlantic fleet. Somebody asked Captain Clarke about how long it would be before he could report the *Oregon* in fighting trim, and he said he thought he ought to have ten minutes anyway!"

"Jiminy, that was fine!" said Harry.

"You see, if she could have come through the Isthmus she could have cut that fourteen thousand miles down to four thousand. That's what started the talk—and later the shovels."

"Ye-es," mused Mr. Wentworth, "that Isthmus has been in the way a good many years—ever since the time of Columbus. If it hadn't been for that, I suppose he'd have sailed around the world. They say he and some of his men pushed up one of the Isthmian streams in a small boat and got within fifteen miles of the Pacific."

He spoke in a gentle, pensive kind of way as if the sorrows and disappointments of Columbus affected him more than the *Oregon* and the Spanish War.

"Yes, but they didn't know it," some one suggested.

"No, that's the sad part," observed the old gentleman, "*almost* to win."

"He kept on trying, didn't he?" Harry asked. Instinctively, he spoke in a low tone, for Mr. Wentworth had seemed to set him the example.

“No, my boy, not after that. He had spent his whole life and grown old trying. That was during his fourth voyage. He was not young, like you, with hope and the world before him. He had nothing left but enemies and an ungrateful country. His star had set. The Isthmus of Panama dealt him the final blow. It knocked him out.”

For a moment no one spoke, and a vision of the great discoverer rose in Harry's mind.

“It knocked the French out, too,” said some one, and there followed another pause.

“It won't knock Uncle Sam out,” said another, grimly.

“No, it won't knock Uncle Sam out,” smiled the old gentleman. “At least, not while he has tall, strong young men to help him,” he added, glancing pleasantly at Harry.

The boy blushed. “Will you— Did Columbus go straight home then—and die—soon?” he asked.

“No, my boy, he didn't go home for two years. He was wrecked on the coast of Jamaica. I think it was the saddest part of all his sad story, sadder even than when they sent him home in chains.”

Mr. Wentworth placed the tips of his fingers together and looked musingly at the ceiling. The others smoked silently. And meanwhile the wind howled outside.

“It's a great thing, my boy,” said the old man, “to find a way.”

Harry smiled. The expression reminded him of Gordon.

"Columbus couldn't find a way because there wasn't any—at least, not there. And he couldn't make a way—no one could then. Now, Uncle Sam is making a way with the help of men, and boys, who don't give up. I sometimes think it's better to go on with a good purpose, to carry out a worthy resolution, even if you know it will kill you. Whatever you do, don't give up. I think you said you are nineteen?"

"Yes, sir."

"I wonder if you ever heard of the message to Garcia in our war with Spain? How President McKinley wanted to send a letter to Garcia who was somewhere in Cuba, but nobody knew where. He entrusted it to a man named—I can't think of his name now, but he took the letter and entered the Cuban jungle. He risked fever, quagmire, rebels, and everything, but finally emerged on the other side of the island, having delivered his letter. I was just thinking of another fine fellow whose name isn't mentioned in most histories—Mendez. Did you ever hear of him? He was a common sailor with Columbus in that pathetic last voyage."

Harry was fascinated. His eyes (they were big, sober eyes except when he laughed) were riveted upon the soft-spoken old gentleman.

"I wish you would tell me about him," said he.

“I will, indeed, my boy; the knowledge of him may help you sometime, who can tell?”

Those who were in that corner of the smoking room formed a little group of listeners as the old man talked. You hear a good deal of history in the smoking rooms of the Panama steamers. Never once did Harry's eyes leave the speaker. And as the vessel bore them on through wind and night toward the fair isles which are forever linked with the name of the great discoverer and with the memory of the old Spanish days, the boy listened to this story of the humble sailor, Mendez, and of Ovando and the poor old “Admiral of the Ocean Sea.” Strangely enough, the thought haunted him that the knowledge of it *would* help him; that sometime, somehow, he should be brought very close to this old bit of fifteenth-century history. Perhaps it was because the speaker's soft voice and white locks and fatherly smile made him seem like a prophet.

“Of course, you know that when Columbus started on his fourth voyage it was his last forlorn hope. He believed still that he could find a western passage to Asia. He was weary and very ill. But that is nothing when one is full of hope and courage, and he still had those. With his little squadron he put in at San Domingo, which he had previously discovered, but the Spaniards refused to let him land. He could not understand that—naturally.

No one can understand it, except a Spaniard. Well, he proceeded on his voyage without the provisions he had hoped to procure there. He explored the coast of the Isthmus, going up the various small streams. He followed the Chagres to its very source and it led him, not across, but into the jungle.

“ You see, my boy, Uncle Sam’s way is different. He doesn’t follow the Chagres; he makes the Chagres follow him. There used to be a great deal of slavery down there in the old Spanish days. There is only one slave now—the Chagres River. It cannot lead people to death and disappointment any more. It has to obey its master.”

Harry felt a thrill of patriotism and pride as the old gentleman continued.

“ Well, he entered and named the beautiful harbor of Porto Bello, but he found no passage. I dare say, if he had lived a few thousand years earlier he might have found one, for in digging the Culebra Cut to-day they find clamshells and petrified fish. So the oceans probably joined once upon a time. Well, the determined, indomitable old man, weak, sick, exhausted, giving his orders from the bed in his little cabin, pressed on, hoping against hope, while his company grumbled and his little ramshackle vessels were slowly being eaten by worms. Up and down the coast of the Isthmus he went, restless and eager, like an animal seeking escape from its cage. He would not give up. But finally the time came when

he must give up for he needed food. And when he realized that his quest was a failure, it nearly killed him. 'Some day, perchance, one will find it,' said he.

"So he turned the prows of his miserable little ships toward Cuba. But he never reached Cuba; he had to beach his vessels on the coast of Jamaica. And there, in the wrecked vessels, the company lived for more than a year. They bartered with the Indians and by hook or crook kept starvation away. But they could not live so forever. Every wind that blew tore some plank from their wretched hovels on the beach of that desolate island. And there, with the waves beating about him and an awful death drawing grimly nearer every day, with mutiny and dissension among his crews, the discoverer of the New World lay and languished.

"Now this Italian, Mendez, had gone ashore every few days and bartered with the natives and pacified them or outwitted them, as need arose, and in this way or that he had procured food. For this purpose he had made himself a rough canoe. Columbus saw all this, and at last, one day, he sent for Mendez.

" 'Diego Mendez, my son,' said the old Admiral, 'I know of your many services and most marvelous device wherewith you have vouchsafed us food and safety here in this savage land where the Lord has been pleased to cast us up. None of those whom I

have here understand the great peril we are in excepting you and myself. We are few in number and these savages are many; moreover, our poor shelter giveth away each day before the storm. But I have thought of a remedy, Diego Mendez, my son, and I would beseech you how it may seem—whether possible or not possible.

“‘I am minded that it is many leagues to Hispaniola and across a sea where is much treacherous storm. And only by the exceeding grace of God and many prayers to the Virgin may it be traversed in such wise as I would fain think possible. In this canoe you have, my son, might some one pass over to Hispaniola and there, in Santo Domingo, procure a ship by which we may, perchance, be delivered from this great peril into which we have fallen?’

“You see,” said the old gentleman, “what the poor old Admiral was driving at. But he didn’t like to say it right out. Hispaniola at its nearest point was one hundred and twenty-five miles away, and even if a canoe could make it, there was another three hundred miles through swamp and jungle to the Spanish settlement at San Domingo. Of course, Columbus knew what the Caribbean Sea was, with its hurricanes, treacherous as a cat. The canoe would have to go through what they call the Windward Passage, between those two islands, a rough, treacherous expanse of water with a continual cross-

current to keep one out of his course. We'll pass right through there ourselves in two or three days.

"Well, now, of course, Mendez knew what the old Admiral meant when he said 'some one.' He meant just that same reckless, daring, vain, devil-may-care sailor who was standing before him.

"Mendez was a regular hero, and he believed in all the pomp and circumstance of heroism. He was fond of glittering uniforms and high-sounding names, and I suspect that he liked an audience and applause and liked to have the stage properly set for his deeds of valor. I think you're apt to find those traits along with great recklessness, and for my part I rather like such blustering accompaniment. At all events, Mendez answered Columbus this way:

" 'Don Christopher, Admiral,' said he, 'the danger in which we are placed I well know and am much perplexed at our extremity. As to what you propose, I hold it not merely difficult, but impossible; for to traverse a sea of forty leagues in a frail canoe would be a peril I doubt none would undertake. Indeed, I know not who there is who would adventure upon so extreme a peril.'

"Then neither of them spoke until the old Admiral finally said, 'You are right, Diego Mendez, my son; I know of none who would adventure.'

"Then spoke Diego Mendez. 'Don Christopher, Viceroy of the Indies and Admiral of the Ocean Sea,' he said, 'methinks it were best for us to be

sure there are none. Therefore, I beg that you would summon all our people, high and low, and propose this enterprise to each of them. And at the very last you shall so approach Diego Mendez and he will make you answer.'

" 'That I will do, Diego Mendez, my son,' said the old Admiral. And that he did and none would venture. So last he came to Diego Mendez and he said, 'Diego Mendez, I have bespoke them all and none would venture. How say you, Diego Mendez?'

" Then Diego Mendez, away back in the fifteenth century, said in a different language almost exactly the same words that you, my boy, said a few moments ago, in answer to one of these gentlemen's questions, and it was that which reminded me of this incident.

" 'Señor,' he said, 'my good master and Admiral of the Ocean Sea, *I am prepared.*' "

" The Scouts' motto," murmured Harry.

" Yes—those are splendid words."

" And he went, sir? "

" Yes, he went; he went in that little frail, ramshackle canoe. The adventure was one to fill a book. He started several times and had to return. Finally, he induced several Indians to go with him. But they sickened from the exposure, from hunger and thirst, and were useless. The eastern extremity of Jamaica, where he set forth over that wild ex-

panse of Caribbean Sea, is now my home. If you should ever visit Jamaica, my boy, and should care to venture so far from Kingston as Garden Harbor, I can show you, near my estate, the little stretch of beach from which Mendez set forth. Grantley is the name of my place. It is a fruit plantation."

"You live in Jamaica, then?"

"Yes; but the point is, and this is what I wanted to show you, that there is no nationality, or creed, or degree, or anything else when one *is prepared*. You can be prepared in any language and in any age. Whatever you make up your mind to do, do it. That is the spirit which is digging the canal. And that was the spirit which enabled Diego Mendez to cross that sea. What is that little expression? 'Be sure you're right, then go ahead'—and don't give up.

"Well, at the end of many days (I think he was three days crossing the sea) Diego Mendez, hungry and emaciated, his clothing in rags, unrecognizable, half naked, with his flesh torn by bramble and thicket and his skin yellow with fever, appeared like a ghastly specter before Ovando, the Governor of Hispaniola, and told him of the plight of Columbus."

There was a moment's silence, broken by one of the listeners: "What'd Ovando do?"

"He did nothing—not till several months had elapsed and he was forced to."

"Nice kind of man, eh?"

"He was like all Spaniards," observed the old gentleman, softly; "I see a great many, and they are the same yesterday, to-day, and forever. I never yet knew a Spaniard who—"

He stopped short, for at that moment the door opened and the stout man with the fur coat and the Croton alley eyes came inside and sat down. His entrance turned the conversation into another channel, and Harry soon went to his stateroom. He lay awake for some time thinking over the old gentleman's narrative. He liked Mr. Wentworth immensely, and he hoped that his "adventures," as Gordon would call them, might indeed lead him to Jamaica so that he might visit Grantley. The motion of the vessel also kept him awake for a time, and when he finally fell asleep he had a strange dream.

He dreamed that he and Mr. Wentworth were shipwrecked on a desert island and that Mr. Carleton Conne courageously volunteered to go to Panama on the back of an alligator and notify Colonel Goethals. Just as he was apprising the Colonel of their predicament, the stout man with the Croton alley eyes approached from behind and pushed him into Culebra Cut, where he was washed along the Canal to the Gatun Dam. Here he met Balboa, who lent him his barrel. In this Mr. Conne floated back to the desert island, and they were all presently

rescued by the battleship *Oregon*, which happened to be passing in command of Christopher Columbus.

The next morning there was a very dainty passenger list printed in gold, at each plate in the dining saloon. Among the names were three which Harry checked with a lead pencil. These were Josiah E. Wentworth, Grantley, Garden Harbor, Jamaica; Carleton Conne, New York City; and Alonzo Zamora, Panama City. He was not perfectly certain that the last name belonged to his fur-coated acquaintance, but it chanced to be the only foreign name in the list except those which were manifestly German and one that was manifestly French.

Harry had, I need not say, solemnly promised Marjorie Danforth that he would send her picture postcards of everything; so during the morning he sat himself down in the writing room and addressed half a dozen to her as a starter, showing the main saloon, the promenade deck, and so forth. In addition he mailed her the passenger list, with a few words written on the back:

DEAR MARJORIE:—

No tarantulas or alligators so far. Weather nice and cold. No wish to be a "what do you call it." Will let you know if I have. Have made three acquaintances—names checked. First I like very much; last I don't like at all—Spanish, I think.

Second one I don't know whether I like or not. Show this to Gordon.

Best wishes,
HARRY.

If he had waited ten minutes before dropping his mail in the letter box he might have been able to express himself more conclusively in regard to the second name. Indeed, the back of the passenger list would not have held all he would have had to say.

It was a clear, crisp morning, and Harry started forward along the deck intending to deposit his cards and letter in the box at the foot of the grand stairway near the purser's office. The deck was lined with people in steamer chairs, covered with furs and blankets and with caps pulled down tight over their ears. It looked like a picture of an open-air sanatorium. Farther on some young men and girls had marked the deck with chalk into squares, each numbered, and were scaling plates into the various spaces. It seemed to be great fun, for the motion of the vessel confounded their calculations. They asked Harry to join them, and he said he would like to when he had mailed his letter. Still farther along, the chairs and benches became more sparse. And then, in an isolated spot forward, he passed a bench on which sat Mr. Carleton Conne and a younger man. Mr. Conne nodded briefly to

Harry and went on talking with his companion. The wind was toward Harry and he heard, or thought he heard, a little of what was said as he passed.

"He knows me," Mr. Conne said with that clenching of his teeth and drawing of his lips apart that had made Harry nervous. "What I say I'll do, I'll do, and that if I hear another word from him. So you can tell him that. Is he coming out or not?"

Harry did not learn whether the person in question was coming out or not; but somehow he had the idea that if he did come out there would be trouble. This notion possessed him so much that instead of returning to join the players he strolled along the deck on the opposite side and forward again to where the pair had been sitting. They were not there, and he strolled far into the bow, to a deserted stretch of deck. Here was a chain across, with a sign hanging from its center which bore the words,

PASSENGERS NOT ALLOWED BEYOND THIS POINT

Beyond it was a little deckhouse, and from the other side of that he heard voices. Possessed by the thought that something wrong was in the wind, he passed the chain and stole noiselessly along in the shadow beside the house. Beyond it the sun was

streaming upon the deck, and close by the rail, a few feet forward of the sunny side of the little house, Harry beheld a sight which made him shudder.

There was Carleton Conne, his fingers fixed like a vise upon the throat of another man, who was struggling frantically to avoid being thrust over the rail. The expression on the face of the man Conne was one of heartless, cold determination. His teeth were set tight. Against him, his wretched victim, a young fellow with yellow, curling hair, wrenched and struggled in vain. He was almost halfway over the rail, his mouth gasping and his head rolling loose, when Harry, recovering from his sudden shock of surprise and horror, cast off his ulster and, springing forward, thrust himself between the pair, wrenched the assailant from his victim, and threw him to the deck.

“Now I know,” Harry panted, as he stood over him; “I—I—know what you are now—you—you—”

CHAPTER V

TO INTRODUCE VASCO NUÑEZ DE BALBOA

FOR a moment Carleton Conne lay prone, as if stunned, with Harry standing over him. Then, rolling sideways and propping his head on his forearm, he called, in his brisk, businesslike tone:

“Did you get that, George?”

In bewilderment, Harry saw the light-haired fellow whom he had rescued from a terrible death, leaning against the rail, shaking with laughter. A few feet away, on the sunny side of the little deck-house, stood another young man, and near him the silent but truthful witness which was to make Harry's deed renowned in the land—a motion-picture camera!

“You bet I did!” laughed the fellow called George.

“Good!” said Carleton Conne, rising and arranging his disordered scarf. “Now, you're a real hero,” he added, turning to Harry.

Harry stood gaping. He wished that the deck would open and swallow him.

“I—I'm an infernal fool, you mean,” he stammered. “I spoiled it, I suppose.”

"Not at all—just the thing; we'll end it right there. Have to change the name, that's all. 'Saved by the Scout'? No, that wouldn't do, you're not wearing your suit. Let's see, now. Got a pin, Andy? Good. You pulled me all apart, my boy. I feel like a daisy when the girl gets through with it,—'He loves me, he loves me not'—let's see, now,—'The Ocean Hero'? No, that's no good.—'The Tall Tourist' is better."

"No, *please* don't," said Harry.

"No? Well, time enough for that, but you're in for it, now, my boy."

"But—I'd like to explain," said Harry. "Then perhaps I won't seem quite such a—such a fool! My friend Gordon, the little fellow, started me—he—"

"Mighty nice little fellow, too; George, you should have seen him."

"Then I thought I heard something you said when I passed you on deck—something about your settling it on this trip and not being afraid and—oh, well, I put this and that together and—"

"And they didn't fit," said Mr. Conne, cheerfully.

"I'm a fool, Mr. Conne."

"Oh, no, you're not. Here, let me make you boys known to each other; Andy Breen, this is Mr. Arnold, who rescued you from the would-be assassin; shake hands. Mr. Arnold, this is George

Warren. Here, George, come and meet the hero. That's right. You got the snaps, too, George? Good. We've got him where he can't get away from us."

Mr. Conne was in high good humor, and Harry could not long remain embarrassed or abashed in the full sunlight of his brisk, rattling, genial talk. It seemed as if he had known him for years. The others were nearer his own age, so that Mr. Conne, though but a young man himself, appeared to be the responsible member of the party. The two strolled along the deck together.

"I'll tell you how it was," Mr. Conne said, "and then you won't be so puzzled. Andy's as fine a boy as ever lived. He's just twenty-one; been to Labrador, Africa, Mexico, Montclair, New Jersey, and goodness knows where all! Sketch? Why, he can juggle with a pencil, give it a few twirls and there's a landscape! Born in him. He's a wonder! He set his heart on this thing and now, for all I can learn aboard, we're going to meet a snag on the Isthmus. I doubt if we can get permission to film up anything inside the Zone. That's my honest opinion. The government has a picture show of its own for the benefit of employees. Well, now, don't you ever mention this, understand? Andy did some foolish talking about trying to *buy* a privilege, and he got quite stubborn; said money would do anything. Well, my money won't; and so I told

him, and he kicked up. Andy's just a boy or he wouldn't talk such nonsense. You can't buy any privileges down there. Why, there isn't any more graft than there is yellow fever—the Old Man sees to that. It's clean all kinds of ways. I've seen the Colonel—seen his eyes—and I think I come pretty near knowing him.” He paused. “And I come pretty near knowing myself, too.”

“I wish,” said Harry, “that *I* had come a little nearer to knowing you.”

“Why, Great Scott,” continued Mr. Conne, “Central America ought to be big enough for us to stretch ourselves in. The Canal has been pretty well pictured up, anyway, if it comes to that. But the little fellow—what's his name—was right. There are other things down there. I'm going to take the boys down Darien way—San Blas country—and film up some of those Indians. We'll push up into the jungle. Why, let me tell you something; do you know there's a canal across already down near Colombia?”

“What?” said Harry.

“Sure as you live! There's a series of connecting rivers, deep enough for canoe travel. There's something you didn't know! You can go right across to the Pacific—hop, skip, and a jump. We'll do that, and film up and snap up everything.”

“Snap up?”

"Yes, snapshots. George got a snapshot of you. They come in handy for ads and posters."

"Oh," said Harry. "I hope mine won't."

"Well, we'll see."

"Do you expect to be long on the Isthmus, Mr. Conne?"

"Year or so, more or less. I want to do the Balboa country—that's down Darien way, you know, fifty or seventy-five miles east of the ditch. That's where he crossed in fifteen something or other. First man to go over."

"A gentleman in the saloon last night was telling about Columbus, how he tried for a passage across the Isthmus."

"Yes, poor old fellow, he got stung. You see, he was hunting for a ship passage. Balboa, a few years later, cut his way across with a hatchet. It was a great trick."

"You seem to know all about the history of the Isthmus."

"Yes, I've got E plus, as they say in school. —Why can't you go down to the Darien with us when we go? We'll fix the time to suit. Let's see, you'll be off on leave in ten months. Six weeks, I think you get."

"Oh, I don't know, Mr. Conne—I guess I'll stick right at my work."

"Do, eh? Well, I guess Uncle Sam will have something to say about that. He'll make you go for

the benefit of your health. He's a mighty nice boss. What are you going to be?"

"Just a clerk, but I hope to get a chance on the outside, some."

"You will."

They had come to the place where the young people were playing, and here the two parted, Harry joining the players.

For the rest of the voyage he found himself mostly among the young people, where, once or twice, he met Andrew Breen and George Warren in the deck games. His efforts to talk with old Mr. Wentworth again seemed always to be futile. He had his family with him and was nearly always occupied with others, though he bowed pleasantly to Harry whenever they met. And Mr. Conne was always busy in the writing room or shut in his state-room or talking with the men passengers. He saw enough of Mr. Alonzo Zamora, who was never in the company of any one, but he did not care to improve that person's acquaintance.

On the afternoon of the third day his thoughts were again turned back to the old romantic Spanish days. Approaching a little group of passengers who were looking and pointing from the rail, some with glasses, his gaze fell upon a little mass of land with a white strip along its near side; and he looked at it more intently when he heard one of the party say that it was the island of San Salvador, where

the great discoverer had first set foot in the New World. They were passing through the crooked island passage in the Bahamas, and soon the spot of land diminished to a mere speck, but Harry watched it as long as he could make it out.

The next day they were plowing through the Windward Passage of the West Indies. The water had now grown blue and seemed more transparent. The air was balmy and fragrant as Harry stood at the rail watching the flying fish at play. He was now, indeed, in the tropics,—that strange region of enchantment, the scene of so much bravery and of so much tragedy and of so much mystery and romance. Far to his left, beneath fleecy clouds, he could distinguish what seemed to be a mountainous promontory. He took from his wallet the little folder of the steamship line and studied its map. If they were now passing through the Windward Passage the land he saw must be the western extremity of Haiti, the termination of that long, thin arm that reaches westward toward Jamaica. If it were not for that long, thin arm the nearest point of Haiti would be two hundred instead of one hundred miles from Jamaica. And here, upon these very waters, across the path that this great ship was following and toward that black and mountainous headland to the east, had plied the sailor, Mendez, in his little frail canoe more than four centuries ago. Harry sauntered across the deck and concentrating

his gaze looked far westward for the shore of Jamaica. But this he could not see. How long must Mendez have been out of sight of land, he wondered? And what kind of place must this western peninsula of Haiti now be? And how would it seem to be paddling such a little bark across this vast expanse of treacherous water?

During the night the vessel must have rounded the southeastern coast of Jamaica, for shortly after daylight they were at the wharf in Kingston Harbor. When Harry realized this on awakening, he hastened to the gangway in time to see old Mr. Wentworth go ashore. Two ladies and a young man and a girl accompanied him, and a train of attendants followed with his luggage.

"Good-by, Mr. Wentworth," said Harry, reaching over the rail of the gangplank.

"Oh, good-by, my boy," said the old gentleman, surprised but cordial, as he laid down a bag and reached for Harry's hand. "You're up early."

"Yes, sir," laughed Harry. "You see, I'm prepared."

"Ha, ha, ha, so you remember that, eh? Well, good-by to you, my boy, and good luck; and don't forget Grantley."

"No, sir, I won't."

It was plain the old gentleman was of some consequence in the English isle, from the reception he

received on the wharf and the deference paid to him. He was not pestered by aggressive negroes like the other arrivals, nor forced willy-nilly to one of the ramshackle buggies waiting. He and his party made their way to a handsome carriage, and that was the last Harry saw of them.

There was not time to go far in Kingston, so he amused himself by watching the little negro urchins who dived for coins in the clear waters of the harbor. From the steamer's rail and the adjacent quays, handfuls of coppers were cast into the water, while to encourage the business one little ebony delegate scurried about the deck jingling a handful of small coins and offering to change nickels, dimes, and quarters into cents.

"Plenty penny, plenty penny," he would say, showing and jingling his money. Harry took ten cents' worth of pennies and casting them into the water watched the scramble and splash that followed. He heard one of the ship's officers tell a passenger that the harbor, like all tropical harbors, was infested with sharks; that scarce a week passed but one of these laughing little negroes descended, never to rise again.

"You can always tell," he said; "a little red comes up to the surface—he's usually a mile off by that time." This dreadful fact did not seem to interfere with the business, but it spoiled Harry's enjoyment of it and he walked away.

Three days more and they were approaching the Isthmus. A thrill of expectation came to Harry at the first sight of the coast of Panama, as he realized that he was now in the torrid zone, though somewhat above the equator, and that presently he should actually see the Canal. Large masses of ominous dark cloud drifted slowly over the low, light green hills that rose, one above another, from the seacoast. It was not the green of northern foliage, but vivid and glossy as if it had been varnished. Now and then a jutting headland could be seen, covered thick with vegetation, and at intervals a deep bay, indenting the coast, and little islands from which, here and there, a lonely palm tree rose, looking at a distance like a modern drop light with a fancy shade, and at shorter range like a feather duster stuck in the earth. In the distance was the mouth of the Chagres River, and he knew that five miles inland along its channel the mighty Gatun Dam stretched between the hills to check the course of the river when all was ready and Uncle Sam should say the word.

Straight ahead was the harbor of Colon, with Manzanillo lighthouse rising above it. On nearer approach the wharves and harbor looked like other wharves and harbors the world over. There was a mammoth white Hamburg-American liner moored at her pier, whose passengers, mostly tourists, were beguiling themselves with the same pastime that Harry had seen at Jamaica. Into the water went

the coins, and in splashed the shining black urchins after them.

It was while the vessel was docking that Harry's attention was attracted from this perilous, but joyous, occupation, which with a shudder he refrained from encouraging, to a strange object that stood some yards out from the wharves. It had two smokestacks and looked something like a ferryboat except that a long pipe line, like an unearthed water main, extending from it, inscribed an enormous circle over the water, and winding its way across a stretch of shore disappeared in the brush. The part of the pipe between the shore and the strange apparatus was held above the surface by floats chained under it at intervals. This great pipe line, especially near the apparatus, quivered and vibrated like a monster wounded serpent. But the chief thing about the whole affair was its noise. No such noise had ever before assailed Harry's ears. Compared to it, the noise of a saw-mill would have been a gentle whisper. The roar of a lion would have been a soft lullaby.

Some of the passengers from the Hamburg-American cruiser were evidently visiting this outlandish thing, for a trim little launch stood alongside it and here too, from its white sides, shone in bold relief the black tumbling forms of the little diving urchins, who had apparently gone along to carry on a sort of branch business.

"Good-by, Harry."

The boy turned. "Oh, good-by, Mr. Conne; you going ashore? I'm awfully sorry—shall I see you—"

"Yes, we're going to ship aboard the first train and rustle right over to Panama. You can't go ashore yet, I suppose, till the Doctor gets through with you. Good-by. Remember, we're at the Tivoli up on Ancon Hill—right near the hospital. Come over and see us now, won't you? Come and bring your knitting. We'll be off here and there, but the Tivoli's our headquarters—at least, till the dry season, when we can camp. Any time you happen to have the blues, tired, homesick, or anything like that, just come right over and have a chat about old times."

"It *does* seem as if I'd known you all my life, Mr. Conne," said Harry, grasping the outstretched hand.

"That's right, so you have."

"And I'm glad you called me Harry. I haven't heard that for seven days. It sounded good."

"Sure enough! You didn't suppose I'd call you Professor Arnold, did you—you great big kid?" he added, giving Harry a thump. "You stay here and watch the vacuum cleaner; go down in about fifteen minutes, they'll be ready for you by that time."

"Is that a vacuum cleaner?"

"That's what it is. This is house-cleaning day, you know—Friday. Colonel always has the bottom of the harbor tidied up a bit. I'm coming, George; just saying good-by to Harry."

Harry said good-by to Andrew Breen and George Warren, who came up, and then he was alone. Yet, somehow, he felt that he was not alone on the Isthmus as long as Mr. Carleton Conne remained there. He knew the inspectors were busy with the laboring class, a number of whom, chiefly negroes, had been brought from Jamaica. They were to be silver men, so called because they were to receive an hourly wage and would be paid in silver. Harry was on the gold roll, and was to receive one hundred dollars a month. His lodging would be furnished him free by his generous boss.

While he was lingering on deck, awaiting the leisure of Uncle Sam's inspectors, he became aware of a sudden excitement on the deck of the lumbering craft near by. Tourists rushed to the rail, and presently several men in overalls came on deck. No one on the *Ancon* seemed to be aware of the commotion, for most of the passengers were going ashore. But it took Harry scarce a moment to realize what had happened. One of those wretched little divers, trying to make his poor living in the only way he knew how, must have gone down for the last time. Horrified, Harry gave a quick glance for the ominous spot of red on the surface of the water, but none

was visible. Then, realizing that the last forlorn hope lay in instant action, he threw off his hat and coat, wrenched off his shoes, and was over the rail in a flash. He had donned light clothing in deference to the tropical weather, and it impeded him but slightly. If there was one thing more than another in which he was proficient, it was swimming. His jack-knife was in his pocket, and opening it he held it in his teeth. If the shark were still below, he knew how to stab him. He swam under the pipe line, and it seemed as if the vibration and noise had lessened. As he approached the apparatus, some tourists called frantically to him, but he did not heed them—scarcely heard them. He took his knife from his teeth just before going down, so as to keep his mouth tight shut, and at that moment a man in a dirty khaki suit yelled to him, seeming to call him a fool. That was the last he heard.

Instantly he was below, the clear water on which he had counted became murky and thick. He heard a slow, pulsating sound, which he thought was in his own head. He was caught in a kind of whirlpool and drawn down, down. The throbs came at longer intervals—stopped. His head was whirling, and he seemed to be groping in mud. He looked up, but could see nothing through the thick water. His head was bursting—he could stand it no longer—he must breathe. With his first half-conscious stroke to rise out of this apparent earthquake,

he touched something hard. His hand went around the edge of it. It seemed like a barrel. Something soft impeded the movement of his hand round its circumference. As much as he could be conscious of anything in his half-suffocated state, he thought it was something which was, or had been, alive. He tugged at it and wrenched it loose. It was no easy matter, for some strange power seemed to hold it there. Whatever it was, he got it and keeping tight hold on it with one hand, he exerted all his ebbing strength and rose through the mud and scum to the surface.

They hauled him aboard, and the next thing he was conscious of, some one was bathing his face gently and saying, "You all right?"

"Sure," he answered, "just a little dizzy; what was it?"

"You brought him up, my boy. Did you think you could stab a suction dredge?"

"He—he alive?"

"Just about."

He was lying on a bunk in the cabin of the mammoth dredge.

"That—that's the second mistake I made," he said, weakly and ruefully, to the dredgers and tourists who crowded about. "I thought—I—two men were struggling and—it was just a moving picture."

"Yes," said a man, gently, as if to humor him.

"We all make mistakes. *I* made a mistake. I called you a fool."

He soon learned all there was to know. There had been no shark. The little fellow had been drawn into the suction pipe of the great dredge and the machinery had been stopped just in time to leave him limp and half dead across the edge of the pipe where Harry found him, and where he had clung desperately as the suction lessened. Harry was not long in recovering and went back with the tourists in their little launch to the *Ancon*. He was greeted by a man in white, who held something which looked like the pair of rubber tubes through which one listens to a pay phonograph. He smiled at Harry and said, "Well, my boy, you made a good beginning."

"I hope that isn't a suction dredge," said Harry.

"No, that's just a stethoscope. How do you feel?"

"Pretty dirty."

"All right otherwise?"

"Yes, sir."

The physician went down to Harry's stateroom with him while he opened his steamer trunk and got out some clean, dry clothes. The rest of his inspections were all made and perhaps for that reason, as also because of Harry's exploit, he chatted pleasantly with him while he made the examination required by law, but which, he observed, he

"guessed was scarcely necessary." Indeed, his examination of chest and lungs was most perfunctory.

"Guess you've proved that already," he said. "You smoke cigarettes?"

"No, sir."

"Smoke at all?"

"No, sir."

"Any bad habits—besides trying to fight suction dredges?"

"Can't think of any, sir."

"I believe you; parents both living?" he asked, jotting down the answers. "Ever had pneumonia—typhoid?"

"No, sir."

"Eyesight good? Wear glasses?"

"Yes, sir—no, I don't."

"Any physical defects?"

"I—I've got a tattoo mark on my arm," said Harry, rather hesitatingly.

"You have? Well, you're a great boy," said the Doctor. It was plain he did not approve of tattooing but that he very much approved of Harry.

"Let's see your appointment," he said after he had vaccinated him, according to regulations.

Harry showed his appointment, together with his Civil Service certificate and his photograph for identification. For it is only in stories that a boy can march into the Canal Zone and secure a position offhand. If Uncle Sam is a good boss, he is

also a rather particular one, and comes pretty near to knowing who it is he is hiring. The Commission's doctor had examined Harry before he left home, but that did not obviate the inspection which all must undergo at the Isthmus.

He was told to present his Civil Service certificate together with his appointment and photograph at the Department of Construction and Engineering at Culebra. "They may send you over to Empire, I can't tell," the Doctor added. For when one's appointment calls for simply a clerkship, he is assigned to the department where his services are most needed at the time.

"After you get your assignment, take it to the Quartermaster's Department at Culebra, and they'll assign your quarters. Have you any money?"

"I have about a hundred dollars, sir."

"All right, because you don't get paid for a month. Don't try to stab any more suction dredges," he added, and the next minute the genial inspector was standing on the wharf, listening to a score of excited negroes who were protesting against his rejection of their services.

It appeared from what Harry heard, as he stood by, that no negro might go back to work on the Canal after once leaving and that Uncle Sam had a little private way of his own for "spotting" former employees. This was nothing else than the vaccination mark, which consisted of three little spots in

triangular form instead of one large one, and it was as good as a play to see the Doctor making a rapid re-inspection to satisfy them, and rejecting them one after another, on the testimony of these little telltale marks. "He didn't vaccinate me that way," thought Harry. "Maybe he thought I wasn't likely to prove a 'what do you call it.' " He smiled, thinking of Marjorie Danforth.

The vessel was now pretty well cleared, and there was not another train across for an hour. So Harry amused himself with a glimpse of the city of Colon. But before he left the shore he examined more carefully the great dredge which had all but swallowed him up and which was now working away again with ear-splitting din. "I might have been sucked up by that under-water pipe and forced through that snaky-looking thing to a dump a mile or two away," he thought; for he had seen already the way, or one way, by which his new boss dredged out the harbors and cleared a deep-water passage from the mouth of the canal to the open sea.

The excitement of the voyage over and his new acquaintance gone, Harry felt quite alone in the little Atlantic port. It was not a nice place. The streets were narrow and muddy, and a muggy dampness prevailed which made him depressed and uncomfortable. He saw none of the parti-colored vegetation, none of the things which his boyish imagination had associated with this romantic tropic

land. It might have been the squalid section of any northern city, or again it seemed like some cheap resort where useless trinkets are thrust before one's face at double their value.

He waded along through muck and mud, past a wharf where dirty negroes were loading bananas, past ramshackle, tumble-down sheds and houses with pigs and dogs wallowing in the adjacent filth. Garments were strung on lines across the unpaved streets from one unpainted hovel to another, as if the deluded citizens expected the sun to come out in this dismal, murky land and dry them. Now and then he forded the mud on clapboards which had fallen from the buildings or on barrel staves which the accommodating residents had laid for that purpose. As he plodded on past all the filthy impediments, pausing ankle deep in mud to note the "sights" of this Isthmian city, the lines kept running in his head,

A tidy man is Uncle Sam, with coat and waistcoat gray,
He keeps his city nice and clean, and sweeps it every day.

"Nit, not," thought Harry, "not this one."

But he was soon of another opinion, for even here in this wretched hole Uncle Sam would shortly descend with his broom and mop and paving stones, and startle the inhabitants with such a spring cleaning as they had never dreamed of. The precious barrels of stagnant water were doomed; every one

of them would be thrown into the harbor. Harry's sturdy old boss, if he had only known it, was coming down the line like a conquering hero with his gun over his shoulder, and his gun was filled with disinfectant. But Harry's boss could not do everything at once. It is a long job cleaning house.

On a corner (if you could call it a corner where two rivers of mud intersected) a ragged negro girl tried to sell him a watch chain. "Dollar—'Merican money," she said. Dirty Chinamen and suspicious, frowning Spaniards eyed him from their open doors or unglazed windows. A man, some kind of foreigner, wanted to sell him a lottery ticket. People, mostly negroes, lay about, indolent and languid. Those who were not too lazy to move were carrying things on their heads. Every one was sullen and eyed him suspiciously. When he asked how to get into Cristobal (which is the American suburb of Colon) one man paid no attention and another refused to tell him unless he would buy something carved out of a cocoanut shell. It looked like a jack-o'-lantern and cost "Two dollar—'Merican money." One or two spoke threateningly in an undertone as he passed; some jeered with coarse jokes and laughter. He was evidently not welcome.

After a little he felt a big drop on his face, then another, and he backed into a shelter just in time to escape a drenching almost equal to the wetting he had had in the harbor. There was no forewarning

of the storm, and the rain came down in streams—bucketfuls. It was a deluge. He had never seen it rain so hard in his life. Looking through the torrent to the shacks across the way, it looked almost the same to him as when he dived under water. He soon learned that this happened every day except from May to December, and even then it happened—whenever it wanted to.

It had come on so suddenly that he had backed into the shelter without so much as asking leave, and it now occurred to him that in all probability he was not welcome there. From these uncomfortable doubts he was presently relieved by a voice behind him which uttered the single word, "Hello."

Amazed at this cheerful hint of hospitality, he turned, and became conscious not only of the owner of the voice, but also of the kind of place in which he had taken refuge. It was the porch or shed of a miserable shanty. The two shutters of a window just behind him were open at a right angle. Across the top of these, from one to the other, lay a stick of bamboo, and exactly in the middle of this stick sat a green parrot eying him shrewdly. The word was the first suggestion of civility which the boy had heard since he wandered into this wretched quarter, and it gave him a grateful and friendly feeling toward this diminutive host, which seemed not at all disconcerted at his approach.

"Hello, yourself," he said cheerily.

"Poor—hello—pretty rain," said the parrot.
"Poor bananas out in the rain."

"Oh, that doesn't hurt the bananas any, Cap," said Harry, trying to stroke the bird. "Don't you worry about that."

"Fred—red—red—Fred—red balanas in the rain, under the bal-ana tree," said the parrot.

"So?" said Harry. "Well, don't you care."

The parrot eyed Harry's finger as it stealthily approached, and when it was near enough, took it ever so gently in its claw and removed it to a respectful distance. The movement was dainty, almost human, and although in the nature of a rebuff it won Harry. He took no more liberties, but examined the bird closely. Its body was a rich green, the edges of the feathers being tinged with black, and its tail feathers were black, red, yellow, and blue alternately, though all these colors did not show except when the tail was expanded. Its eyes were large, observant, and as gentle as those of a dog, and now they held a ruminative expression as if their owner might be thinking of things far away or long past. No human eyes could have looked more reflectively, more intelligently. Beneath each eye was a tuft of yellow which died away among the green feathers of the throat. Across the top of the head, from eye to eye, was a band of steel-blue. The beak was black.

Now, the little touch of gentleness which was in

Harry's nature, no less than his training as a scout and his intimacy with the great outdoors, had given him a fondness for and a familiarity with bird life. He could tell you the habits of the robin or the oriole; he could distinguish the different kinds of eggs, and he had acquired this knowledge without ever in his life robbing a nest. But of the parrot, that strange but welcome alien in northern climes, he knew nothing, except, indeed, that a parrot learns to repeat words, and will say, "Pretty Polly," "Polly want a cracker," and one or two other expressions generally supposed to constitute the parrot vocabulary. He supposed that a parrot's imitative propensity was its chief and only claim to favor. He knew, in a hazy way, that sailors are very partial to parrots, and since he was so fond of deducing, he might have inferred from this that there must be something strangely companionable about these odd birds. But, as I said, he had never given the matter two thoughts. He knew that Robinson Crusoe had a parrot and old John Silver in "Treasure Island," and that there was a parrot away home in Oakwood, which used to hang on a porch and call "Hello" and "Pretty Polly" at the children on their way to school. And that is all he knew about parrots. Nothing was farther from his thoughts than to own one. He did not know that the brain of a parrot is proportionately more than three times as large as that of any other bird; that,

although they live for a hundred years or more and are sometimes slow to learn, they never, never forget. The only pets that Harry had ever had were the splendid horses which they kept at home. Of these he was inordinately fond.

Suddenly, the parrot looked at him sideways. There was a kind of impudence which he liked in the frank way in which the bird was sizing him up. Then, as if convinced that the visitor was unworthy of further notice, he began to preen his feathers, drawing them dexterously through his beak, one by one; then he settled down to the occupation of rubbing his upper against his lower bill, making a harsh, grating sound. He gave one more glance at Harry, as if he considered him altogether beneath his notice, and shrieked, "Loretta!"

"I guess I queered myself by what I said about those bananas," thought Harry.

The shriek brought forth from the shanty a being, horrible in appearance, who yelled, "*Callese la boca!*" and then, seeing Harry, distorted his countenance into what was probably meant for a smile. He had the complexion of a mulatto, but his features, like his speech and voice, were Spanish. He might have been seventy years old, or eighty, or ninety. The rags he wore were certainly not less than a hundred. His hair was gray and matted, and he was of a flabby physique, hulking and abhorrent. His smile did not conceal the lowering

suspicion and greed which lurked in his cruel, fishy eyes as he spoke to Harry.

"He fine bird—plenty talk—he know Spanish—English—two dollar."

"'Merican money?" prompted Harry, with a touch of disgust.

"Ugh, yes, 'Merican money. He fine bird—no green."

"No? What color *do* you call him?"

"Ugh! Color, yes—brains, no."

"Oh, you mean he's no greenhorn?"

"He no bronco—catch in trap—bronco. Bronco no learn talk. Take from nest ver' young—learn talk. Two dollar—'Merican money."

"Oh, that's it, is it," said Harry, half interested. "How old is he?"

"Ten—fifteen—"

"Oh, I guess he's older than that; his feathers are kind of long and shaggy."

"Ugh," said the man again, shrugging his shoulders, "twenty-five, maybe. Two dollar, 'Merican money."

"I don't want him," said Harry.

The man's face instantly became lowering, almost threatening.

"He seems to be worrying about some bananas," Harry added indifferently, as he turned to go.

"Wait," said the man. "I show you him talk." From somewhere in the mysterious depths of his

tattered, greasy clothing he brought forth a lead pencil.

"Loretta," said he, holding the pencil close to the bird. The parrot tried gently to remove it with its claw as it had removed Harry's finger. "I make him talk English. Here, Loretta, say 'Under banana tree.'"

"Under balana tree," said the parrot.

The man brought the pencil down smartly on the parrot's head. The bird winced and shrank under it. It made Harry wince, too.

"Not *balana*—*banana*; say 'Merica—tree cheer, red, white, blue. Now—"

He hit the bird another crack with the pencil.

"Don't do that," said Harry, sharply. "I heard him talk English. He talks it better than you do. I'm not going to buy him."

The danger of losing his customer drove the man to extreme measures. Several times in rapid succession he brought the vicious little weapon down on the smooth, beautiful head, the bird crowding and hunching himself as low as he could on his perch to lessen the force of the blows.

Harry's voice trembled as he spoke, but he looked the man straight in the eye. "Stop. Don't do that again!" said he.

The man looked at him, taken aback.

The boy's hand fumbled nervously in his pocket.

"I make him talk," said the man.

Harry's hand stopped where it was.

"If you hit him again," said he, "I'll throw you down in the mud as sure as you live."

The man glared at him in unconcealed rage. Out of his pocket Harry brought forth a rumpled, greasy old two-dollar bill. The man watched eagerly, his anger ebbing. Harry rolled the bill up tight and, ignoring the man utterly, placed it in the claw which the bird, anticipating an attack from another quarter, held up.

"Here, Cap," said Harry, gently; "give him the money."

The parrot turned the rolled-up bill slowly about in his claw, and lifted it to his beak as if to determine whether it was all right; then, his soft brown claw clasping it tightly, he held it straight out as if to exhibit it.

Harry spoke ever so gently to the bird, and looked at him smilingly, but he could not disguise his contempt for the man.

"Give him the money, Cap."

The hypocrisy of the fellow's assumed gentleness (now that his sale was assured) as his big, flabby fingers removed the bill as if in loving sympathy with this pretty little act, was disgusting. It happened to be the same bill which Mr. Alonzo Zamora had given Harry on shipboard, and since Harry, like all boys, had a predilection for shining currency and crisp notes, he was glad to get rid of it. Little

he thought, as he watched the preparation of the little reed basket in which it was to travel, that the parrot, when the chance came, would pay him back, with interest.

Though he had grave doubts as to what Uncle Sam, as landlord, would have to say about this unexpected tenant for the bachelor quarters of his helpers, Harry consoled himself by reflecting on the good scout law that cruelty to any of God's creatures is an abomination; that a scout must discourage it, and must stop it whenever he has the chance and at any cost.

As Harry, with his little wicker basket in his hand, stood in the mud (worse than ever after the deluge) to survey more carefully the filthy place he had just quitted, he noticed a sign above the shed, bright and new in comparison with the rest of the place, and printed in English to catch unwary tourists who were visiting the Isthmus to see Uncle Sam in his rôle of canal digger. It read:

PEDRO REQUELME

BALBOA BAZAAR

"Good idea," said he, peeping into the basket. "I'll name you after the discoverer of the Pacific Ocean, Cap, the first fellow to cross the Isthmus—Vasco Nuñez de Balboa."

And he picked up a sunflower seed from the few which Pedro Requelme at his request had put in the basket for the parrot's supper, and dropped it through the wicker bars plunk on the bird's head to christen him.

Within an hour of the time Harry left the hovel of Requelme, there plodded through the mud a man whose attire seemed out of place in that squalid quarter. He carried a fur coat over his arm, and behind his crookedly adjusted gold spectacles there gleamed two little brown eyes which looked like Croton alleys. Picking his way from stone to board, he turned in at the Balboa Bazaar.

So earnest was his conversation with the proprietor that neither of them noticed the ramshackle cart which a few minutes later stopped at the door. Out of it stepped a man in spotless white, and the gold lettering on his white hat read, "Isthmian Canal Commission, Sanitary Squad." Puckering his mouth dubiously at the offensive surroundings, he gently lifted from the cart a little mulatto boy, who seemed to be helpless.

"This the place?" he asked kindly.

The little fellow nodded assent. He had been all but killed in the harbor of Colon and rescued by some one or other, no one seemed to know exactly who, except that he was a tall young fellow who had dived from one of the vessels moored near by. A

young lady tourist had told the man in white that he had a long lock of hair which he was continually brushing back from his forehead, and that he had big eyes. But that was hardly enough to identify him.

CHAPTER VI

UNCLE SAM, HOST

It was one of the favorite notions of Master Gordon Lord, whom we shall not meet again for some time, that a map is a deceitful contrivance. He had never seen, he said, a town or a county or a continent that bore the slightest resemblance to its map. The edges of a map, he said, were "all scalloped," but "Look at the shore—it isn't scalloped at all."

We shall now experience some of Gordon's difficulty, for we cannot see the whole of the great Panama Canal at once, and the wonder and magnitude of it are in danger of being lost upon us. At least, so it seemed to Harry Arnold as he looked from the window of the old-fashioned railroad car which was bearing him inland. Scarcely had the train pulled out of the Colon station when it plunged into the jungle, and for a while there was not much more view from the windows than there is in a tunnel. Then, after five or six miles of swampy undergrowth and thick, arching vegetation, the first sign of Uncle Sam's handiwork burst upon his view.

He was bound inland for the little town of Culebra, and while the train is rattling through this first stretch of tropical thicket, let us, since there is really nothing to see, spend the little while in finding out what sort of enterprise Harry's sturdy and indomitable boss had undertaken to put through. Then, when we come out into the open, we shall be in a fair way to appreciate what we see. In a word, as Mr. Carleton Conne would say, let us roll the Canal up and put it in a peanut shell so as to have it handy.

And first, let me warn you not to look at a map of the Canal Zone; it would drive you distracted. For you will find Colon, the Atlantic port, on the left-hand side and Panama City, the Pacific port, on the right-hand. You will twirl the map around this way and that, but you cannot make it seem right. Then you will say a dreadful mistake has been made. But be calm. Get a map of the *whole Isthmus*—not just the Canal Zone—and then you will see what sort of practical joke the Isthmus has been playing. For it forms a sort of S when you see the whole of it; the Panama Canal runs through the very middle of the S, and Harry was right when he told Gordon that the sun rises over the Pacific Ocean at Panama. But Uncle Sam is not responsible for that, though he has indeed taken some pretty bold liberties with the face of nature. So whether the little cities of Panama and Colon are

where they ought to be or not, at least we have them located and we can make a start.

You will understand, then, that the Isthmus between these two cities is about fifty miles wide. A little distance from the town of Colon is the mouth of a river, the Chagres. This river is freakish, like almost everything in the tropics. At one time it is a skinny little stream; then, presto, it is a roaring torrent. Now, if we follow the channel of the river beginning at the wrong end (that is, at its mouth) we shall find that it appears to run across the Isthmus. And that is just the joke it played on Columbus. For when it gets a little past the middle of the Isthmus, it changes its mind, makes a turn, and runs up into the jungle. And there is the end of it—or, rather, the beginning.

Here is where Uncle Sam comes on the stage and this is what he decided to do. About five miles in from the mouth of the river its channel runs between high hills, and beyond these through comparatively low land. Right there, where the Chagres River runs between the hills, is and always has been the little town of Gatun. Now, mused Uncle Sam, if a stupendous dam were built between those hills,—a perfect “whopper” of a dam, a cement mountain, in fact, right across the channel of the river,—what would happen? Why, the river would be much perplexed how to get out, and in fact it *wouldn't* get out; it would just pile up and spread

over a vast tract of country, reaching nearly half-way across the Isthmus. And there is half the Panama Canal, made!

But if the river continued to flow against this mammoth obstruction, piling up behind it and spreading, why would not this great lake soon spread across the whole Isthmus? Because, when it reached the middle of the Isthmus, the hills would be too high for it. So, instead of rearing an obstruction, as he had done between the hills at Gatun, here Uncle Sam would have to *remove* an obstruction; that is, open a channel to admit the waters of this great lake and convey them on to the Pacific. And that is where he rolled up his sleeves and set about the prodigious task of digging a ditch from the southern side of the lake to the Pacific Ocean. And there would be the other half of the Canal, made!

But an important question must first be settled. And about this Uncle Sam's engineers and engineers from other countries, whose opinions he asked, disagreed. The question was whether the Canal should be dug down to sea level, so that the water would flow, unhindered, through it, or whether much of this digging should be saved by having the channel not so deep and building locks, or great elevators, as you might call them, near either ocean to lift ships from sea level up to canal level and to let them down again at the other end. Now, the

great Gatun Lake would cover a tract of low, marshy country about eighty-five feet above sea-level, and it would be very difficult to dig a sea level channel through this mushy, spongy soil. It would probably fill up as fast as it was dug out. Then, there would be the great ditch running from the lake to the Pacific, which would have to be dug about twice as deep. It was decided that this was out of the question, and that it would be better to let the whole Canal stand eighty-five feet above sea level and to have these locks, or elevators, to lift and lower the ships. There were other questions which Uncle Sam was in a great quandary over, but the spongy soil of one half the Isthmus and the prodigious work of digging the other half to sea level decided him in favor of the "lock" canal.

And that brings us to the three stupendous tasks which were well under way when Harry Arnold reached the Isthmus: the building of the great dam to create a vast lake eighty-five feet above the sea and halfway across the Isthmus; the digging of the mammoth ditch down to the same level and the rest of the way across the Isthmus; and the building of the locks, or lifts, at either end to raise and lower the vessels.

There was one other big task, too, and this was to clean the Isthmus (or that part of it) from disease and filth, so that men could go and work there without sickening and dying; and I am not so sure

but that this discouraging and apparently hopeless undertaking was the greatest of all. At all events, the building of the Panama Canal would involve, generally speaking, four great jobs.

Before Harry took the train, he had wandered through Cristobal, the American suburb of Colon, and here he had seen streets paved and clean, houses tidy and in good repair,—indubitable signs that Uncle Sam had been abroad in that section. So we cannot exactly say that when the train emerged from the jungle and the conductor called out, "Gatun," the sight which broke upon his gaze was really the first of Uncle Sam's work that he had seen. But it was the first to thrill him with a realization that he was actually along the channel of the great Canal. There, close by the train, was the mighty skeleton framework of the towering Gatun locks, two flights of three locks each, and beyond them curved away the great unfinished concrete mountain, over which the luxuriant vegetation of the jungle was already creeping, ultimately to hide the vast gray mass and claim it as its own.

Harry alighted from the train as it stopped, and standing on the brink looked down the sheer concrete wall into the chasm of one of the locks. It was like looking from the roof of a ten-story building. There was a bridge across at the top, and beneath it two great skeleton metal structures standing upright and reaching to within a third of the

top. These enormous steel partitions, filled, as it seemed to Harry, with countless little windows (later to be filled with concrete), extended from either wall of the great lock basin toward the center, where they remained far enough apart for several temporary railroad tracks to pass through. Harry supposed that these great partitions were the gates of the lock. The bottom of this huge chasm was filled with all sorts of junk and paraphernalia, with railroad iron and funny little cars, with pipes and cement barrels. This was one of the first pair of locks, and would be capable of raising a vessel about one third of the eighty-five feet necessary to float it into the big lake.

There was no time to examine it more carefully now, and Harry jumped aboard as the train pulled out of Gatun station. Most of the way from Colon the road had run close to the Canal channel, but he had not been able to see it through the jungle. Now, an open country lay before him. At Gatun station he was, in fact, upon the very brink of the big lake, except that there was no lake as yet, and would not be until the spillway, or outlet through the great dam, should be closed up. Then it would take a year for the lake to fill. The train skirted this vast basin, where brush and trees had been cut away. This would be the bed of the lake.

"How different it will look," thought Harry, "after a year or two." Until recently the line had

run through the middle of this territory, but it had now been relocated so as to hug what would be the shore of the lake. The hills which rose here and there in this cleared area would shortly be transformed into islands (those that were high enough), and Harry wondered what would become of the people who lived among these hills and even in the low, marshy land from which they rose. Through the middle of this tract (and Harry could distinguish it in the distance) the Chagres River wound its way from the hills and, unhindered, through the open, uncompleted spillway of the dam.

Soon the open country seemed to be narrowing, the hills and jungle closing in around their pathway, and presently the train stopped at Gorgona. They were now at the opposite side of Gatun Lake, having steamed around it, and were halfway across the Isthmus. Harry had seen all that could be seen in passing of one of the four big jobs.

The whistle blew in the shops at Gorgona as the train stopped, and a motley crew crowded aboard. Again Harry was reminded that everything on the Isthmus is crazy and endways. A man in a pair of filthy overalls, and with the sleeves of his dirty khaki shirt rolled up and the front thrown open, displaying his chest, tumbled into the seat in front of him and fell into conversation with a young fellow in spotless white duck. He looked like the ash man who used to empty the barrels in Oakwood.

The young man in white asked him if they were going to have Lambert pitch, and if he knew Lambert. Yes, he said, he had known Lambert at Harvard—but the steam-shovel men could “wallop” the rodmen and levelmen *without* Lambert, as the rodmen and levelmen would pretty soon see. Harry guessed that the young man in white was a rodman or a levelman.

Everywhere it was the same. Grimy, filthy laborers were chatting about “subaqueous excavation” and asking each other whether they were going to the musicale or the tea at Ancon, but most of the talk, back and forth, from one end of the car to the other, was good-natured banter about the coming game between the steam-shovel men and the rodmen and levelmen. It all helped to make Harry feel at home.

The train stopped at Bas Obispo and “Dynamite Charlie” got on. At least, that is what they called him. They asked him where he got his pink calico hat and said the pay train must have come along ahead of time. But this didn’t trouble Dynamite Charlie; he sat down and began to talk with some one about a new engine with an alternate action, which they were using. Some one wanted to know if it wouldn’t be a good idea to have a “Lidgerwood’s Unloader” on the ball field to move the steam-shovel men around from base to base. Dynamite Charlie paused to say he thought it would be

better to have the base bags filled with blasting powder to blow them around. This was a good dig at the man who looked like the Oakwood ash man and he turned, smiling, and gave a pleasant wink at Harry. Harry hoped he might come to know him and wondered what in the world a "Lidgerwood's Unloader" was.

The next stop was Empire, and he knew they were running close to the brink of the great Culebra Cut. Here the Harvard man who looked like the Oakwood ash man got out, and a young woman in white started a little child down the grassy slope to meet him, calling frantically to him not to dare to touch the child with such dirty hands.

"Is he a steam-shovel man?" Harry asked of the white-clad young fellow who sat near him.

"Yes, but he's going to be an engineer; he's head of the Boy Scouts in Empire, too; nice fellow, but they can't play ball."

"Scoutmaster," thought Harry.

A good many alighted at Empire, and others got on. It was here that Harry caught his first glimpse of the trim, pleasant bungalows in which the employees on the "gold roll" lived. The grassy slope near the station was covered with them, and farther back, as he later learned, there were whole streets of them. Some were small, as if for a single family, and others large enough to have a dozen or more rooms. They were covered with shingles,

most of them, yellow and brown, with bright green roofs, and their cheery, airy look was enhanced by the porches and balconies which surrounded them. Everything was so neat and orderly that it looked like a toy village. The Disbursement Department was here (according to the trainman's announcement), and Harry saw the office close by the station. He recollected that the doctor had said they might send him over to Empire. He rather hoped this might be so, on account of the scoutmaster.

Again the train started. There were a few tourists in the car, and perhaps it was chiefly for their benefit that the trainman called, "Next stop is Culebra—Culebra next; Administration Department, Quartermaster's Department, Department of Construction and Engineering." He closed the door with a bang.

Presently the great Culebra Cut broke upon Harry's view. From directly under the tracks, as it seemed, the land sloped down, down, and away to an abysmal depth, where railroad tracks were laid about this way and that like those of a toy railroad. There were men down there, but they looked like mere specks. This was the big ditch of which he had heard so much. The opposite side of it was so far away that one could not clearly see objects there without the aid of field glasses. There were little patches of vegetation upon the slope, especially toward the top, for here, too, the persistent jungle

was creeping in and some day, not so very far away, there would be no sign left in this mighty channel to show that it was the work of man. The train ran along the brink of this great slope for a few minutes, and then on the opposite side a large, isolated hill caught Harry's eye. Then, "Culebra," called the guard.

Harry lifted his suit-case and the little reed basket containing Vasco Nuñez, and stepped from the train. The basket was wrapped in paper, and he asked the station agent if he might leave that and his suit-case there until he knew where he was to make his home. Then he went up a little slope. Here, facing him in the bright, green turf, was a floral design of tropical flowers. His boss, always thoughtful and considerate, had arranged it, I doubt not, for just such boys whose homes and friends were many miles away, to give them hope and heart and bid them be of good cheer and feel at home. Harry read it with a grateful and full heart:

WELCOME TO CULEBRA

Around the corner was a larger and especially attractive building of the same general bungalow type, and surrounded by a bright green tropical hedge. A sign over its door told Harry that this was the clubhouse. He soon found that all the buildings, large or small, official or otherwise, were of the

same light, cool, airy, gay pattern, with trellises and porches surrounding them like artistic scaffold work. He was in a little settlement, or park, near the station, where the bungalows faced this way and that, with a little octagonal summer-house on the lawn and tidy paths winding about. Close to the clubhouse was another good-sized bungalow, with a pretty flight of open stairs running up its side. In front of it were bushes and flowers. It was of brown shingles, with snow-white trimmings and screens enclosing its upper and lower balconies. It was as clean as wax. Facing this was an odd, cosy little box of a building which reminded Harry of the artistic little real estate offices he had often seen in suburban neighborhoods at home. There were a good many of these back in the town proper, as he later found; they were the married men's quarters, little tropical homes. "The kind you get with a pound of tea," Mr. Conne told Harry, and Harry thought it might be very hard to leave these pretty, tiny houses when the time came for the occupants to return to "the States."

The night was now falling. Like the rain, it comes suddenly in the tropics, and Harry lost no time in seeking the Quartermaster's Department. Here he presented his papers. The attendant who examined them turned the pages of a book and said he would see if he could find a vacant "hundred-dollar room." Harry thought that was a good deal

for a room to be worth, until he learned that the size of an employee's room was determined by the size of his salary, and one hundred dollars was the smallest amount paid to any one on the gold roll. His papers and photograph were very carefully examined, and then the clerk asked the same question the doctor had asked:

"Have you any money?"

Harry mentioned the amount of his little horde of cherished, crisp bills.

"Well, I'll give you a hotel book," said the clerk; "it's good for sixteen meals at thirty cents a meal at any mess-house along the line. Amount will be deducted from your first month's pay. You can get a provision book later if you want one; coupons good for anything you need at Commission's stores. But you'll have to work out the cost of one first." He talked in a crisp, rapid, disinterested way, as if he had said the same things many times before.

"Why didn't you come in on the early train? Oh, yes, I see, missed it. You'd better report at the Department of Construction and Engineering in the morning—at eight. Your quarters are furnished, but no bedclothing and such things. You have those?"

"N-no, sir; it's too late now to get them, I'm afraid, but I can get along until morning."

"Yes;" he handed Harry a card. "Bachelor

quarters, nearest clubhouse; show this card. No cooking allowed in rooms."

He had done his duty, and turned away.

Now, it had been Harry's intention to say nothing about Vasco Nuñez, but to install him in his own room until he could think what else to do with him. He knew that Uncle Sam's rules about living quarters were very strict, and he suspected that there might be some objection to this unusual tenant. So he would let the fact be discovered in the natural course of things. I say that was his *intention*, but the plain truth is that it was no more in his nature to carry out such an idea than it was to pick up the clerk's fountain pen, which lay on the counter before him, and put it in his pocket. Perhaps there would have been nothing wrong in such a course, but it was not like Harry; so now, with a little rueful smile, he announced that he had a parrot.

"A parrot?" said the clerk, with a half-puzzled look which Harry thought held a touch of contemptuous disapproval. "You won't have much time for pets down here."

"I didn't bring him down with me; I got him in Colon. A man was pounding his head and the first thing I knew—I—I bought him. I thought of letting him go, but I see his wings have been clipped and I'm afraid he's been in captivity too long for—"

But the clerk was not interested. "Guess that's between you and the inspector," he said tersely.

"No cooking in the rooms," he repeated, handing Harry the card which he had made out, and a key.

"He's not going to cook him, are you, Kid?" said a man who was poring over an enormous book directly behind the clerk. He gave Harry a whimsical wink as he spoke, and the boy went out smiling.

It is surprising how pleasant and encouraging little winks and smiles are when you are far from home; and he thought how wise and helpful was the good scout law to "smile and look pleasant." But how about the man's calling him "Kid"? Why, that was what he had always called Gordon. Was it possible that he, Harry Arnold, was to be the "kid" now? Indeed, the Isthmus was a strange place if that should come to pass. But so it was. He was the youngest fellow on the gold roll, one of the very few who had been accepted under the minimum age limit of twenty. To the burly, hearty men who now saw him for the first time, he seemed very young and inexperienced. They liked his earnest, open face, his slender, agile frame, the boyish way he had of pushing back the hair which was always falling over his forehead, the eager intensity with which he always listened when anything like an adventure was being described; and, one and all, they called him "Kid," and so he came to be known from Colon to Panama.

It happened that the building where he was to

make his home was the very one near the clubhouse, and as he ascended the stairs inside, looking for Room 7, he heard voices through the open doors, talking from one room to another. The occupants were evidently changing their clothing after the day's work. One called downstairs to know if another had "swiped" his necktie, and the familiar answer came back that the person addressed had not and what was more that he would not take it for a gift.

"The Old Man down the line to-day?" some one called.

"Sure—two senators with him; you ought to have seen him when he saw where we had Blake's tracks shifted to. He thought we wouldn't get over that for a week. You going over to Ancon?"

"If I can find a clean coat, I am."

"Is Barney's craneman back?"

"I didn't know he was off; what's the trub?"

"Piece of rock."

"Oh, from that blast at Empire?"

"So I heard; he won't be back for a couple of months, I guess."

"What's Barney going to do? He was just topping the record, too, wasn't he?"

"Hey, George, got any white thread?"

Harry stood at the door of his room, fascinated. It was fine to think that he should be a part of all this, that he should be concerned in "topping rec-

ords," and that, perhaps—perhaps, they would come and borrow white thread from *him*.

It was a small room, whose size and furnishings and general aspect made him think of his room at boarding-school two years before. A little iron bed, glowing with a fresh coat of white enamel, a mission center-table, a mission straight-backed chair and armchair, a wardrobe, a neat bureau, and a porcelain wash-basin with running water, completed the furnishings. From the center of the ceiling hung an unshaded electric bulb. There were no pictures, ornaments, or bedclothing. Harry opened the reed basket, which he had regained from the station agent, and held it close to the towel-rack, which opened fanlike. The parrot looked cautiously out, set one claw daintily on the towel-rack, then the other, then shook his feathers and looked about, cocking his head this way and that.

"B-r-r-r-r," said he, "very pretty Polly."

"I know, Cap," said Harry, opening his suit-case on the bed, "but they don't care anything about looks here. 'Handsome is as handsome does.' I'll dig you up a cage somewhere if I have to keep—I don't mean that," he finished, approaching the rack. "I mean if they'll let me keep you. Do you think you can make out there, to-night?"

He went to the window and raised the shade. In the fast-gathering darkness he could see how close was the rear of the building to the great Cut. In the

distance (a few hundred feet, it seemed) rose Gold Hill, somber now in the dusk, like a great inverted bowl. Between it and the Quarters ran the "ditch." Down in its broad depth Harry could see a row of machines with high, trestle-like towers standing straight in a row like soldiers. All was quiet and deserted down there. The intricate mazes of rail were just visible and fast disappearing as the tropical night advanced. It was no ditch; it was an immense cañon into which he was looking, and man had made it—with the help of those steel monsters which were silent after the day, and all but wrapped in darkness. America—Uncle Sam—had made it! And had invented most of the steel monsters, too!

The sight of this huge channel, the thought of the indomitable will and resistless power and enterprise which had made it, thrilled the boy, and he was glad that he was an American. So wide, so vast did the Cut seem that he had to include it all in his vision or it did not seem like an excavation at all. What could be greater than the triumph of this stupendous channel where, at the bidding of Uncle Sam, the oceans should meet and two continents be severed? He was glad that he was to be so close to it, for it would be an inspiration and a continual incentive. If a thing ever seemed hard, or tedious, or insurmountable, he had but to look into Culebra Cut and say, "This thing can be done."

He lowered the shade and turned on the electric

light. Its glow fell upon the only thing which lay on the table—a little newspaper, *The Canal Record*. On the front page was a heading which attracted his attention. It read:

CANAL MEDALS

One thousand pounds of old French scrap have been forwarded to the Director of the U. S. Mint at Philadelphia by the Chief Quartermaster of the Isthmian Canal Commission, to be used in making Canal Medals. These, as formerly stated, will be awarded to employees who have rendered two full years of continuous, faithful, and satisfactory service on the Isthmus. American citizens alone shall be eligible for these medals.

For each two years of additional service a bar will be awarded to be attached to the medal.

As stated in a previous issue of this paper, authorized, pre-arranged leave of absence shall be equivalent to service. The medals will be numbered consecutively in the order in which they are earned and employees on the silver roll shall be equally eligible with those on the gold roll, provided they are born, or naturalized, American citizens.

All communications relating to these medals should be addressed to the Assistant to the Chairman, Culebra, Canal Zone.

Harry's eyes remained riveted upon this item. Then, in sudden apprehension, he looked away and spoke to himself, counting on his fingers. "November, December, January, Feb— Oh, yes, I will," he smiled; "they can't finish it before then. I'll be here two full years, all right. I'll be here at the finish, and that makes it better still!" He looked at the date of the paper. It was faded, and from its creases he suspected that it had been used

to line a bureau drawer. It was three years old. But the offer was still good, good as the grand old boss that made it, and there were two full years and more left!

Harry, in his joyous resolution, rolled the paper and slapped it on the table, so that Vasco Nuñez de Balboa, on the towel-rack, cocked his head sideways, stretched his neck, and looked inquiringly at him as if he feared the boy might have suddenly gone crazy. Harry opened the sheet again, seeking out and repeating the conditional adjectives, "Continuous, faithful, satisfactory—" Two full years!

"It's a bargain, Uncle Sam!" he said. "I'll take one of those medals home if I have to work myself to death!"

CHAPTER VII

WORK, WORK, WORK—AND A LITTLE PLAY

WHEN Harry awoke in the morning, his first thought was of the medal, and he read the paragraph again. It was characteristic of him that he should think more of this than of the exceptionally good salary he was to receive, considering his age. This would not be pay, but an award, an honor. And he saw the difference. He knew that he would not long receive his salary if he did not do his work, and of course he looked upon his very employment as an honor. But money, he knew, comes and goes, and even if you save it one dollar looks very much like another.

He had among his treasures at home the sword his grandfather had worn at Gettysburg. How proud the old gentleman had been of that sword; how often he had said that he intended to leave it to Harry. Of course, he had received his pay as a colonel, but he never thought of mentioning that, nor of jingling his money and saying, "That's part of the pay I got for fighting for my country." No, no, this medal was a different thing altogether, and Harry already pictured it resting in a little plush

box among his treasured curios, alongside the golden cross he had won from the Scouts. He would hand it down to *his* grandson, so that that proud youngster might know that *his* grandfather had helped to make the wonderful Panama Canal; had worked for two full years, continuously, faithfully, satisfactorily. He remembered how his grandfather, with his funny, old-fashioned scarf, had said, in his cracked voice, "Don't you ever let that sword go, young man! These curio dealers, they'll be after you. Remember, you couldn't buy another one." No, and you couldn't buy one of these medals, either.

Harry had grown up in a fine old home; his father was wealthy, and he had wanted for nothing. But it was one of the good things about that fine old home that the boy, as he grew up, had not been encouraged to think that money can do anything. Here was something his father's money could not buy for him. The richest man in the world could not buy one for him. There were just three things that could get one,—continuous service, faithful, satisfactory. Some day, perhaps, the coin men and curio dealers might get hold of some of these medals and rich men would buy them at fabulous prices. "But they'll never get hold of mine," thought Harry. He would make his grandson promise not to sell it. Then it occurred to him that there wasn't any grandson, or any medal either, and that it might

possibly be the best plan to win the medal before he troubled himself about the grandson.

He was thinking of all this as he went down the stairs early in the morning, wearing a light-weight serge suit, a khaki shirt, and the cap he had worn on the voyage. Some more appropriate attire was on his shopping list, and he intended to descend on one of the government stores at the first opportunity. His destination now was the Department of Construction and Engineering, where he was to report. In the doorway he came face to face with the very man who had sat in front of him in the train the day before, and who had alighted at Empire. He did not look so much like the Oakwood ash man now, though his attire could scarcely have been called "dressy." He likewise wore a khaki shirt, spotlessly clean, but his trousers were worn and greasy—what Harry could see of them, for they disappeared into high rubber boots. His suspenders were unconcealed and conspicuous.

"Your name Arnold?" he asked.

"Yes, sir. I saw you in the train yesterday, didn't I?"

"So? Oh, yes, I seem to remember. Well, my name's Barney; I have charge of a little troop of Boy Scouts we formed down here. I have a letter" (he produced an envelope) "from Dr.—let's see—oh, yes, Dr. Brent, Oakwood, N. J. That your home?"

"Yes, sir," said Harry, in surprise.

"Well, just take a look at that."

MR. THOMAS E. BARNEY,

EMPIRE, CANAL ZONE, PANAMA.

DEAR SIR:

On inquiry, I am informed by the Boy Scouts of America that a troop which has been formed in the Canal Zone is in your charge.

As the scoutmaster of the First Troop of this town, I beg to advise you that one of our boys (who has been especially helpful to me in the scouting work) is about to leave for Panama to work on the Canal.

His name is Harry Arnold. Though I have not the pleasure of your acquaintance, may I take advantage of the fellowship which should exist between scoutmasters, to ask you to accept him into your number and to keep an eye on him personally? Not that he needs watching, except that he is sometimes rather venturesome.

We are anxious for him to come home whole and sound as he left, and if you can help to make him comfortable and put him in the way of making pleasant friends, I should esteem it a special favor.

I write this to relieve his mother in the long absence which she has to contemplate, as well as on my own behalf. I believe he is under the regular age

limit, and that also inclines me to take the liberty of writing you this letter.

Yours very sincerely,

E. C. BRENT, M. D.

“Good old Red Deer,” thought Harry; “he watches us closer than we ever dreamed.”

“See yourself as others see you,” Mr. Barney observed. “Well, now, Arnold, what can I do for you? Which way you going? Oh, good, I’m going there, too. I’m a little in a hurry; let’s walk along.”

He was a burly, resolute-looking man, of perhaps thirty, and hurried along with a sounding, rapid stride. He was pleasant enough, but he seemed to Harry different from what he had seemed in the train the night before. But that, as he reflected, was after the day’s work was over. He was not easy to talk to now, and it wasn’t possible more than to acknowledge the little scraps of information which he offered as they strode along.

“How old are you?” he would blurt out suddenly.

“Nineteen.”

“Eh, heh.”

Then there would be a silence.

“That’s the Administration Building,” he nodded. “That’s where the Old Man lives, right across the lawn. He made that little worn path himself, cutting across to save time.”

Everybody bowed to him, workmen and men who looked as if they might be doctors or civil engineers, clad in spotless white duck; and one who wore a uniform asked him something about his injured craneman, which reminded Harry of what he had heard his neighbor say the night before.

"That's Colonel Greene, Camp Otis," Mr. Barney said.

Then there was another silence, which he broke by saying in a half-preoccupied way that Harry must come over to Empire and join the Scouts. They were all younger boys, he said, because boys old enough to be accepted by the Commission were too old for scouts, and these were little fellows who were too young for their parents to leave at home, "It takes a good deal of my time, first and last, what with these slides we've been having. I dare say you'd make a pretty good lieutenant—sort of assistant, eh?"

Harry said he would be glad to help in any way he could; then, mustering his courage, he came out with a question which he had not had the hardihood to ask until now when he saw the sign, "Construction and Engineering Department," directly before them.

"Mr. Barney," said he, "I'm afraid they're going to put me at a desk, and I don't want to work inside—at least, not altogether. I wonder if you would be willing— I heard somebody say last

night that your craneman was injured. Of course, I couldn't be that, but I thought perhaps if some one was promoted to his place, I might— I wish I could work under you," he broke off.

Mr. Barney scrutinized him from head to foot as they strode along, but said nothing, at first.

"What does your appointment say?"

"It's what they call a blind appointment; they might put me anywhere where a clerk is needed."

"Oh, clerk, eh?"

He did not encourage Harry to say more. It was plain that he was thinking, and Harry had just the faintest tinge of hopefulness that he was being included in Mr. Barney's thoughts.

"Just wait here a minute," said Mr. Barney, when they had entered the Department office. He walked familiarly around the counter and addressed a man with a pencil over his ear. Harry, standing obediently where he was left, heard part of the talk.

"Look here, Frank," he opened up, "what are you going to do about 82? This isn't fair. You people are knocking my record endways. I haven't got but four pitmen and I've got to put one of those in the crane to-day. Fast as I get my men broken in, they send them over to Gorgona dumps. Here, the slide's been active all night; I walked up from Empire this morning to see; half my track's buried and two of my men gone to shift tracks for Blake."

They were evidently good friends, despite Mr. Barney's blustering manner.

"Well, you get your salary, don't you, Tom?" said the other man, with a mischievous smile.

Now, that made Mr. Barney mad, and the clerk knew it would make him mad, and he said it just for fun. There is a good deal of this kind of fun down on the Isthmus, as Harry soon discovered, for it was a great big happy family he had entered.

"I'm not talking about salary, I'm talking about my record."

"We're doing the best we can for you, Tom, honest—"

"No, you're not; now, look here, Frank, here's a young fellow—"

"Come in and see the boss," said Frank.

They disappeared, and that was the last Harry heard. He thought Mr. Barney himself was a kind of human steam-shovel, and his hopefulness grew as he waited. He had heard the words, "Here's a young fellow," and he believed that Mr. Barney would "fix it." How little this burly, vigorous, aggressive, splendid man cared about his salary; how much for his precious "record." Then there came to Harry's mind the words of Mr. Carleton Conne. How often his exaggerated, half-serious observations recurred to the boy! And how true they were, when you got down to the bottom of them! "Why,

yes, I suppose that Canal belongs to you and me and the boys, doesn't it?" Yes, that was right.

Mr. Barney, with Frank and an older man, came out, Mr. Barney talking volubly. He paid no attention to Harry, but Frank opened a large book and asked the boy certain questions, looked at his papers, made him give his home address and "whom to notify in case of death or accident," and sign his name.

"You may go with Mr. Barney and do as he tells you till you are ordered to report at this office."

"Yes, sir, thank you," said Harry, and he felt himself at last a full-fledged worker on the great Canal. More than that, best of all, he was "out on the line."

"I once heard a story about Lincoln, Mr. Barney," said Harry, delightedly, as his companion and new boss hurried him along. "How a woman went to him whose son was sentenced to be shot. She pleaded with him, and he dictated a telegram that said, 'Don't execute so-and-so till further orders from me,' but she wasn't satisfied. 'Well,' said Lincoln, 'I have a poor memory, and I don't believe I'll ever be able to remember to send those further orders.' I hope they'll forget to send *me* orders to report at the office."

"Look out, here," said Mr. Barney.

And Harry found himself descending into Culebra Cut, following Mr. Barney, who strode and

swaggered from one patch of vegetation to another till they came to the bottom, where they swung on to a dirt-train and were carried along the cut to Empire.

All was busy in the great Cut as they rumbled along; the place seemed a human beehive. It looked to Harry about five or six hundred feet wide; but the banks, though high, were not so lofty and precipitate here as at Culebra, where the highest point of land was pierced. In the bottom of the Cut were railroad tracks, running parallel, converging, separating; the place was a perfect maze of rails and switches. At every switch they passed or crossed, a jet-black negro jumped out of a little iron shelter, waved a flag, and disappeared like the figure on a cuckoo-clock. The place was full of moving trains, and sometimes at the junctions they grazed one another; but they never collided, and there was no blocking or congestion, though they seemed to be continually crossing one another's paths. Up on the sloping sides were perched men, here and there, like Brownies, managing the deafening drills whose long, snake-like tubing wound away from them over dirt and among rocks, to the compressed-air main which ran somewhere through the Cut.

Far over against the opposite cliff a monster machine was puffing out black smoke, through which Harry could just discern a stout metal arm slanting upward which appeared to be moving. He ven-

tured his first remark since they had entered the Cut.

“Is that a Lidgerwood’s Unloader, Mr. Barney?”

“No, that’s a shovel—they’re working a pilot cut; looks like 52.”

To Harry it looked like a specter bowing and bending in its cloud of black smoke; and still he did not know what a Lidgerwood’s Unloader was, and here was another mystery,—“pilot cut.” He had discovered, however, that Mr. Barney was not in the mood to act as tourist guide and explain things.

“Here we are—hop off.”

They alighted near the side of the Cut, crossed an empty dirt-train which stood on a siding, and there, close against the cliff, stood good old “82.” To Harry the monster shovel looked something like the caboose of a freight-train, except that the under part was heavier and more massive. A large smokestack rose out of the center of its corrugated iron roof, and there was a door or two, awninged windows on either side of the cab, or shanty, or house—whatever you chose to call it. There was a sort of porch at one end, and from the other a mammoth steel derrick, fully as long as the car itself, extended at an angle of about forty-five degrees. This derrick was crossed midway by a heavy steel arm which could be moved backward and forward by means of a great wheel and heavy chains. From the end of

the derrick, on other extensible chains, there hung an enormous metal scoop. It was prevented from hanging loose and swinging at random by the cross-bar which extended from the middle of the derrick, and to the end of which it was attached.

Thus, as Harry saw, this great scoop could be raised and lowered by the derrick chains, and all the while held rigid in any desired position by the connecting bar. While the dipper hung upon its great chains, this bar could push it out beyond plumb-line, holding it this way or that, so that it could be poked forcibly in any direction, while in mid-air, and of course could never bang against the derrick or stave in the car. The chains were now slack, so that the scoop rested on the ground. Four great wedges, like a set of stupendous teeth, projected from its edge; and, straddling two of these, there sat a couple of men in overalls, apparently waiting.

"Did they send the oil?" demanded Mr. Barney, as he jumped down from the dirt-car, followed by Harry.

"Haven't seen it; what's the trouble?"

"Oh, I had to go down to Culebra, to the office. Here, you, George, or you, Arnold, go over and telephone Supplies that I didn't get my oil."

Harry had not the slightest notion where the telephone might be, but he hurried back across the dirt-train, thinking that if he must ask any questions it would be better to ask them of some one else than of

Mr. Barney. He worked his way between trains and found a switchman's shelter two or three hundred feet across the Cut.

"Got a 'phone here?" he asked the smiling Jamaican negro.

"Yes, suh; raht thah, suh."

When Harry got back, Mr. Barney looked down from the window of the car; his khaki shirt was rolled up and opened in so many places that it seemed hardly worth while at all. "What'd they say?"

"Said it's coming up on Warner's train—ought to be here now."

"All right, you help the men down there awhile now, till we catch up."

Mr. Barney was engineer—that is to say, captain—of steam-shovel No. 82. He had an assistant engineer and a fireman with him, while outside was the "crew," consisting of three pitmen, though Harry, if he could be so called, made a fourth. The pitmen were ordinary laborers or silver men, whose business it was to keep relaying the track as the engine cut its way along, and to do anything else that they were told to do; to wait upon "82" and pay her such attention as she might need. For a steam-shovel is a lady, and no one but the tenderest of tenderfeet would dream of calling her "it."

They were right on the outskirts or "scatter" of a slide which had been active through the night and

which, if they had been a few feet farther on, would have buried "82." As it was, the men were clearing the track ahead which had been laid the night before, and Harry fell to and helped. He soon learned that Mr. Barney, by means of persistent attacks upon the office, had a way of securing the best helpers. Up at the office the cry was, "Anything to get rid of him," and now Harry found himself among a class of silver men whom it was pleasant to know. There were no negroes on 82's staff. Mr. Barney had talked the office deaf, dumb, and blind on that matter, but had carried his point. "I can't make them work," he said.

Two of the pitmen were East Indians, and Harry admired their tall, strong, graceful forms, their dreamy faces, and kinglike bearing. They were good workers, and reminded him of the people in "Kim," which he had read. The third was a burly Irishman who must have been a longshoreman at some time, for he would call "Yo-ho" whenever they hauled a rail to place, which seemed to help the work immensely. He took a great interest in Harry, saying, "Good fur you!" or "Thot's the by!" whenever Harry exerted his strength.

But the working of the shovel was what fascinated Harry, and he was never tired of watching it. He acted as a sort of general helper through the day, up in the engine-room, wiping the smooth, oily steel with cotton waste, taking, as best he might, the place

of the assistant who was cosily ensconced in the little cubby-hole down at the base of the crane, where, obedient to suggestions shouted from above, he swung it this way and that, dropping the dipper against the embankment, pushing it into earth or working it under some great boulder till the stone was safely balanced upon its edge, then swinging it around till its burden went tumbling into the waiting dirt-train. They loaded a car every four minutes; this was dangerously close up to "64," which had been averaging three and a half minutes for the past week.

"'Tis oonly a question of toime," said Kerrigan, "whin we'll have thim bate althegither."

As fast as the trains were filled, away they rattled along the network of tracks, rolling down the slope, for in the office it had been arranged so that the shovels always worked above the level of the trains, and the full trains rolled downhill and away to the dumps or to present their loads to the great Gatun Dam, as the case might be.

At eleven o'clock, when the whistle blew, all hurried out of the Cut, not because they were anxious for an excuse to stop work, but because the midday blast was at hand, and it was just as well to be a few feet away. Harry used his first meal ticket at the messhouse in Empire, and was waiting for the others when they returned. Late in the afternoon, an hour or so before "second blast,"

Mr. Barney, who had scarcely uttered an unnecessary word all day, began to "loosen up" and to chat more or less from the window.

"He ahlwus does thot way," said Kerrigan.

"What is it, George, thirty-four?" he called down to the craneman.

"Thirty-five, *I* make it," was the answer.

"That's going some," he smilingly observed, wiping his forehead. For the first time his manner encouraged Harry to speak.

"What does that mean, Mr. Barney?" he asked.

"Thirty-five hundred cubic yards turned over since eight o'clock."

"That's a good deal, isn't it?" Harry said.

"Equal to the hand work of about six hundred men," he called down, smiling at Harry's surprise.

"Thirty-eight hundred, and we'll have the record. Well, how do you like it?" he added pleasantly, resting his elbows on the window-ledge.

"Fine."

"Tired?"

"Not enough to kill me."

It was nearly closing time now, and the last car of the last train was waiting for its load. Mr. Barney looked down to where Harry stood, filthy and panting, and perhaps the thought came to him that after all this was just a boy who had worked so faithfully at whatever he had been told to do throughout the strenuous day, his first day under Uncle Sam, Boss.

"I suppose you'd like a chance to swing that crane, wouldn't you?" he called.

"It's my middle name, Mr. Barney," Harry answered back, with the boyish frankness that every one liked. "You guessed right the first time."

"Ha, ha! All right, climb up there; George'll show you. Let him have the chain, George."

It was a very cosy little bunk, where you got rides, halfway round and back, all day.

"Don't be scairt, me by!" Kerrigan called encouragingly.

"Here, Kerrigan," called Barney, good-naturedly, "you get away from there! Don't you tell him anything—let him find out for himself."

Here it was again, thought Harry. "It's a great thing to find a way, my boy," old Mr. Wentworth had said. "Don't show him—let him find out," now came down from the window of the engine-room. That is the way that strong men learn; and Gordon Lord, using the phrase in his lighter and more boyish way, was a lesson, young and impulsive as he was, for he delighted to "find ways;" he was always hunting for them and always finding them.

"Now, let's see you put that rock on the car," called Barney.

The engineer of the dirt-train peered out of his cab to see the fun. The trainmen smilingly waited. Kerrigan was dying to give advice. Several young fellows nearer Harry's age (he thought they might

be surveyors from their attire) stopped to enjoy the coming spectacle. Harry had a vague idea that something ridiculous was going to happen and that they all knew it.

"Keerful, keerful, me by! Ye'll hev the forfeit to pay—keerful," warned the generous Kerrigan.

Harry, manipulating the chains, sent the scoop on a wild-goose chase around to the wrong side of the shovel, over the dirt-car.

"Fine!" called some one.

"Going to dump a load of air on the train?" another asked. Barney, his arms resting on the window-ledge, watched the maneuvers, smiling. The dipper made one or two mysterious plunges, finally dived earthward, and, picking up a teaspoonful of soil, swung off, proudly triumphant.

"That tacks about half a cubic inch on to our record," Barney called cheerfully.

"Here's where she comes," some one encouraged, as the dipper, like a lumbering airship, floated over the rock without so much as touching it.

"It just won't behave, will it?" called the fireman, mockingly.

The two East Indiamen looked on, grave but interested. The generous Kerrigan was all excitement and apprehension, but he scarcely dared speak, and the advice that Harry received from the others was hardly practicable. One suggested that he get down on the ground and whistle to the dipper. But

finally the playful scoop was poked against the rock, edged under it until the boulder was dislodged and stood securely resting on the dipper, as Harry had seen a dozen boulders hoisted during the day. Around it went, amid a complimentary silence, until he thought it was directly over the car. Then—oh, then—off it went, back into Culebra Cut on the farther side of the dirt-train.

“The object of the puzzle, ladies and gentlemen,” called out George, from his position just outside the crane, “is to get the boulder into the car.”

It could not be left where it was, in the path of another train; the whistle was about to herald the afternoon blast; and Harry's inglorious career as a craneman must be interrupted. After it was lifted by George (which seemed a very easy matter) the day's work was over, and Mr. Barney, unkempt and perspiring, but smiling, came down and introduced Harry to the young fellows who stood about. He seemed a different man now, ready to joke and talk.

It appeared that Kerrigan's fears were well-founded; Harry was no exception to the rule, and must pay the forfeit.

“Guess you'll have to, Arnold,” said Mr. Barney.

“For throwing rocks in Culebra Cut, in violation of the sanitary regulation that discarded matter shall not be thrown about,” added one.

“For cruelly ill-treating a steel scoop in vio-

lation of the rule prohibiting cruel and inhuman treatment of steam-shovels," volunteered another.

"For overloading a harmless dipper with a table-spoonful of earth," said a third.

"Suppose I ref—" began Harry.

"Then," said one of the young fellows, solemnly, "you are not a member of the Forfeit Club and cannot participate."

"Oh, I'll do it," laughed Harry. "What's the forfeit?"

"Brave, noble youth," said one.

"The forfeit," said another, "is that when you are washed and dressed this afternoon, you shall approach the first respectable gentleman you meet, remembering always to be polite, and ask him kindly to direct you to the—the—"

"The Panama Canal," suggested another.

"Right," concluded the speaker, "the Panama Canal."

It was evident from Mr. Barney's face that these things were not at all uncommon, and Harry was the last boy in the world not to fall into the spirit of it. He went away with them resolved to "die game," which was his nature, and Mr. Barney and the crew of Mistress 82 bade him a hearty good night.

"Is he coomin' back ter-morrer?" Kerrigan called out as he threw a canvas over some part of the mechanism.

"Sure," answered Barney. "Why? You don't suppose *they'll* kill him, do you? He can handle any two among them with one hand."

And that was the only comment he made in regard to Harry throughout the hustling, busy day.

There was not much danger of a quarrel with these new friends. They were as fine a set as it had ever been Harry's good fortune to meet. Two of them were draughtsmen, he found, and one a surveyor. The other two were evidently on the clerical force which he so dreaded. Nothing was said about the forfeit as they took him to the Empire clubhouse, which was much like the one at home (he meant Culebra when he said "Home"), and here he got rid of the loose soil (several cubic feet, to use the proper phrase) which he had brought from Culebra Cut. He brushed up his serge suit and cap, and then they went with him to Empire's commissary store, where, with their advice, he bought several things that he would need,—among them two white duck suits and a pair of thin, high-topped boots. And so, wearing his regular clothing and with his bundle under his arm, he may have looked quite like a new arrival when he suddenly espied, coming around the corner of the Disbursement Office, a man in white duck (though, indeed, everybody wore that), who had a white mustache and a humorous, genial face.

Boldly, but respectfully, Harry advanced while

his companions silently retreated to the steps of a neighboring bungalow.

"Excuse me, sir," said Harry. "Could you tell me where I could find the Panama Canal?"

The faintest shadow of a smile stole over the gentleman's face. "The Panama Canal?" said he. "Certainly. You go right up this street till you come to the Isthmus; the Panama Canal is the second turn to your left; you can't miss it."

"Thank you," said Harry.

"Not at all," said the gentleman, and walked on.

When Harry rejoined his companions they were going through a variety of gymnastics to keep from letting their laughter burst into sound.

"Do you know who that was?"

"No, who?"

"That was Colonel Gorgas, head of the Sanitary Department, man that cleaned up the Canal Zone."

"Wh-e-w!" commented Harry.

"What'd he say?"

"Said to go down this street till I came to the Isthmus, and the Panama Canal would be the second turn to my left; said I couldn't miss it."

"Did he, on the level?" asked one.

"That's just like him," said another.

And, sure enough, it was just exactly like him.

CHAPTER VIII

JACK HOLDEN

So Harry began his work on the Panama Canal "out on the line," and liked it and was proud of old "82." He soon began to call her "the lady" and say what "she" would do, and talk about cubic yards and rock excavation like a regular old veteran. He claimed that if she "had a dipper-stick like 101," she could have put "101" in the background long ago. But even still she would do it; "We've got to urge her a little, that's all, she likes to be coaxed." And it must be admitted that if shoveling coal under her boiler and burying her in black smoke were coaxing, she received a sufficiency of such gentle wheedling.

Harry was now "in the house" with Mr. Barney, whose assistant, George, was permanently in the crane. But now and then he hopped down to give the pitmen a hand, and Kerrigan would slap him on the shoulder and say, "Yur ahl roight, me by; kape it oop; coom down, yur ahlways welcome!" For some reason, the big Irishman had taken Harry under his wing, and made no secret of his fondness for the boy. There was only one thing that Kerrigan

thought more of than of "82," and that was his citizenship papers, creased, crumpled, and dirty, which he kept in his pocket to prove, at a moment's notice, his allegiance to Uncle Sam.

But Harry had his troubles—his haunting visions—and so had Kerrigan. The boy was always dreading that he would receive "further orders" to report at the office. He knew that he was only a "plug," so-called, temporarily filling the place of another, and he feared that as soon as Mr. Barney took his eagle eye from the office they would take advantage of it by immediately sending for him.

Also, in a lesser way, he dreaded the call of the inspector at Quarters, for fear that Vasco Nuñez would be unceremoniously ousted. Anticipating this, he had not bought a regular cage, and Vasco spent his evenings on the towel-rack and in the daytime, during Harry's absence, slept in his little wicker basket. Harry did not admit that he cared very much about this matter; but he did for all that, for Vasco Nuñez had begun to win his way into his affections and become a companion when the boy, too tired to go out, would sit and read through the long evenings, or sometimes just sit back idly watching the bird's whimsical antics. He said a good many things which Harry could not understand, but the bananas, or the "balanas," as he called them, still troubled him, so that Harry came to

think that the poor bird must have an hallucination on the subject.

One other thing troubled him just a little. He dreaded seeing Mr. Carleton Conne. He knew that Mr. Conne would make fun of him, or look at him in that pleasantly exasperating way, if he talked about excavation and records and five-yard dippers. He remembered how Mr. Conne had said, "You'll go daft like the rest of them;" and sure enough, he was right, for now Harry could think and talk of little else.

Kerrigan's trouble was of a different nature, and more perplexing. One noontime, after dinner, as they sat together on the teeth of the dipper, waiting for Mr. Barney, he confided it to Harry.

"Well," said he, "coom Friday, we'll have thim bate, more's the pity, but Oi'm glad av it."

"Why 'more's the pity,' if you're glad of it, Mike?" laughed Harry.

"Did yez niver hear tell av the lad thot wint to the warr and seen his brother amongst the inimy? 'Oi'll shoot him!' sez he, 'only Oi hope me gun ain't loaded.'"

"Have you a brother on 101, then?" laughed Harry.

"Oi hev not, nor a sister, nayther; but there's McConnell oop in the ingine."

"A friend?"

"Sure, ye niver seen a betther wan. Me an' him

coom to Americy thegither and worrkt thegither on the same job, an' what must he do but go to the night school? Wuz ye iver to the night school?"

"No," said Harry.

"Thin ye've missed it, an' Oi'm sorry for that. A brisk, cliver lad like you cud git to be the head judge av the coort if ye wuz to the night school. Well, McConnell, he wint to the night school an' the furst thing ye knew, he wuz makin' out me money orrders fur me, that I sint to the Ould Counthry! Ye should iv seen the ghrand curves and floorishes he had. Look at him now! Wherre is he? Oop in 101 wid near three hunderd dollars fur 'im on ivery paytrain, and me doon here wid a pick and shoovel. Av coorse, Misther Barney will niver shtay on a stame-shoovel; 'tis jist a flier fur 'im, him thot kin do tricks wid the figgers; 'tis a mechinical ingineer he'll be, whin all this fun is over, an' he'll be mixin' wid sich-like as the Ould Man himsilf—Goothals. Ye know 'im?"

"I haven't seen him yet, Mike."

"No? Well, but McConnell, he kin git a job on anny locomotive in the United States afther this. It ahl cooms from goin' to the night school. Ah, ye should a' wint to the night school."

"But you don't want McConnell to have the record, do you, Mike?"

"Oi do not, but Oi doon't want ter see 'im lose it, nayther."

"Well, one of us has got to lose it, Mike. We're the only two in the game—the others don't count. Friday'll tell the story."

"An' a black Friday 'twill be, ayther way ye put it."

"I suppose a fellow's first duty is to his boss," Harry said.

"Well, an' how about his frind?"

"He must never be a traitor—must he, Mike?"

"A thraither! Who said thraither? D'ye say Oi'm a thraither?" he shouted.

"I didn't say anything of the kind," said Harry, half laughing, "and I don't think it, either."

"Well, thin!" subsided Mike.

"Well, then," Harry mocked, "what's all the fuss about?"

"What d'ye think Oi am? Sure, a mon kin lurn his juty widout iver goin' to night school."

"I don't think you ever learned your duty, Mike."

"Phwa-a-t?" he roared.

"I think it just comes natural to you."

"Well, thin."

"And I believe you'd go and sit down on that rock over there at second blast this afternoon and be blown to pieces before you'd see old 82 lose the month's record."

"Well, thin."

"Well, then, there's no misunderstanding, is there?"

“Yur a foine by. Didn’t I say it the furst day I seen ye? Well, thin.”

That afternoon they worked like Trojans, beating the previous day’s record by sixty-one cubic yards. Old “82” dug her way along amid din and smoke, the men laying the track for her as she moved ahead, and Kerrigan calling, “Yo-ho!” to keep them active and encouraged. Now and then a little time would be lost balancing a huge boulder on the dipper, but they would make it up in some way. One after another, the ever ready trains moved into place; then, with the clank of chains and the deafening hiss of escaping steam, the dipper would descend on the embankment side, bury its teeth in the earth, like some animate monster, swing around over the car, and open its bottom and dump its big load exactly where it was wanted. Though all were busy and engrossed, there was always more or less pleasantries over the lifting of a boulder, and even Mr. Barney would look from his window to see it go around balanced precariously on the dipper’s edge. Its progress was always attended with some suspense, and its safe landing followed by a sense of relief and triumph.

Mr. Barney would often send Harry to examine boulders in the path, to report how they lay, how firmly embedded they were, and so forth, so that time might be saved on reaching them, and it delighted the boy to see that as time passed his little chalk-marks were observed and considered, as if his

judgment had a real value. But he liked best to be up near the actual machinery of the engine. He loved to watch the smooth, oily piston moving, to smell the oil, to attend with care or waste upon the needs of the steady, tireless mechanism which seemed almost human.

Across the ditch "101" could be seen in her cloud of smoke, her tiny attendants flitting about her. Her trains were unloading at Tabernilla Dump, where "82's" trains were also unloading. Here the Lidgerwood's Unloader did the trick for both. This was a mammoth plow, drawn along the train by an eighty-ton pull of steam power, emptying it in five minutes, after which the train would immediately start back for the Cut.

In this roundabout way "82" would get some inkling, from time to time, of how much "101" was "turning over." And "101" acquired inside information in the same way. The train crews, coming back, had usually some bit of dump gossip, and it appeared from all Mr. Barney could learn that "101" was a few yards ahead when this day (the last but two of the month) came to an end.

At all events, they would have to "turn over" five thousand "cubics" in the next two days to beat "101's" last month's record, as published, and there seemed every reason to think that "101" would beat her own last month's record by a substantial figure—"unless they're jollyng us," as Mr. Barney

added. In a word, there would be "some dirt" flying in the next two days, and Mr. Barney, when he came down out of his "throne room," buttoning his shirt and letting down his sleeves, sent Harry over to the 'phone to tell "Repairs" to be sure to overhaul his swinging circle, as promised, and to put the rivets in his boom, also as promised. No sooner was Harry returned from this errand than back he went to tell "Supplies" to leave two tons of coal instead of one, and not to forget the oil.

The supply and repair trains were creatures of the night, overhauling machinery and leaving material and provisions in the wee, dark hours, for it would have been the height of disrespect to ask Mistress 82, or Mistress any other number, to go down to the shops to be repaired. No self-respecting steam-shovel would hear of such a thing. A steam-shovel knows its position and must be treated with deference and courtesy.

"She all right, Mike?" said Mr. Barney, banging his hat against the crane to relieve it of its day's accumulation of dirt and dust.

"She's ahl roight, an' swate drames to her," said Kerrigan. "Here, me lady," he added, throwing a canvas over the big cog-wheels in the crane, "put your nightcap on."

"All right," said Barney, heartily. "Good-night, boys. Come along, Arnold."

It was "Scout night," and Harry was going to

supper with Mr. Barney, then to Scout meeting in the Empire Clubhouse. He had been looking forward to this ever since the first day. As "82" was working close to Empire and on the town side, they had but to clamber up the embankment, and Harry followed as best he might Mr. Barney's vigorous strides among the neat little bungalows. As was often the case, it was hard to talk with him, for he was not always disposed to familiar conversation, and his answers of, "Yes," "Sure," and "Guess so," did not seem to invite familiarity or conversation.

"Oh, but I hope we'll top it!" Harry said enthusiastically.

"Like your quarters?"

"Yes, fine; I like everything."

He looked at Harry sideways, in his critically scrutinizing way. "What do you do nights, mostly?"

"Just stay home."

"Don't go into the city much, eh—Panama?"

"I've been there only once, so far."

"Eh, eh."

"Mr. Barney, did you know that Kerrigan knows the captain of 101?"

"Yes, they're boyhood friends. McConnell's one of those smart Irishmen that's worked his way up."

"You don't—er—I like Kerrigan, don't you?"

"Yes, he's a fine fellow—good worker."

"Wouldn't you suppose he'd rather work with McConnell?"

"He did try to, but I was short of men and the office gave him to me as a plug; I've had him ever since. Fellow I had before him I had to throw out—he was too busy with a motor-cycle. You can't tend to a motor-cycle and a steam-shovel too."

"I guess Mike's satisfied," Harry ventured.

No answer.

"I guess—I don't suppose," he blurted out, "that there's any danger, Mr. Barney."

"Danger of what?"

Harry hardly knew how to proceed.

"Well, I heard two of the fellows downstairs in my quarters—they asked me into their room, and they were saying something about some one fixing a shovel."

"Repairing it, they meant?"

"No, I don't think they did, Mr. Barney."

Then there followed another silence, broken only by the sounding footfalls of Mr. Barney as he strode along the winding gravel walk.

"Well, we have to take our chances, Arnold, if you mean the other kind of fixing."

"But you believe in Kerrigan, don't you?"

"Do you suppose I'd have him there, if I didn't? But duty is duty, and conscience is conscience, and human nature is human nature. If you were to be brought up for stealing, say, and your uncle was the

judge, they wouldn't let him try the case—see? That wouldn't mean he wasn't honest. It only means we have to make allowance for human nature—always; just the same as we have to make allowance for escape in a cylinder.”

“Do you always make allowance, Mr. Barney? Do you always think of people that way?”

“N-n-o,” he said, cheerfully conditional. “Foreigners—uneducated foreigners—are very clannish; I make some allowance for them, yes; same as I'd make some allowance for an impulsive young fellow. I don't mean I'd forgive him for any wrong-doing, or justify him, but I'd explain it in that way. Well, here we are.”

This was a good deal for Mr. Barney to say, but he was “loosening up,” as the evening advanced, as per schedule. He lived in a pretty little bungalow, with his young wife and a sturdy little fellow of five, the image of himself. “Here's the only Boy Scout for you,” said he. “Keep away till I get washed! That's right—see him make the full salute, Arnold? How's that? Hello, Jack, when did you come? I didn't see you.”

A young man in the uniform of the regular army rose from a wicker chair in a recess of the little screen-enclosed porch. He was not as tall as Harry, but standing straight, as soldiers do, he seemed taller than he really was. He had blue eyes which blinked nervously, and a little nervous smile seemed to hover

on his lips as if it did not know whether to come boldly out for what it was or to die away altogether. He seemed a pleasant, amiable-looking young fellow, but though evidently popular with the little boy he was disconcerted and ill at ease with Mr. Barney. Harry was not surprised at that; he had suffered the same feeling himself more than once.

"Mr. Barney," said the young man, hesitatingly, "I couldn't come and drill the Scouts last Tuesday. I wasn't feeling—"

"That's all right, Jack," said Barney. "Any time will do; I just thought a little drilling by a real soldier might please them, you know. They were a lot disappointed, but it's no matter. Feeling better?"

"Yes, I think I am."

"Fever all gone, eh?"

"Yes, sir."

"Well, that's good. Come in and eat with us, won't you?"

"No, thank you; I've got to be in barracks at six. Shall I come next week, some night?"

"Yes, yes; we always meet Tuesdays, you know. Come any time."

"I do wish you could do something for him, Tom," said his wife, after the young man had gone. "I feel dreadfully sorry for him. I don't think he's contented."

Harry sat down to supper with the little family in

the pleasant, screened porch. A few yards down the hill the men were pouring out of the Empire repair shops, some coming up the hill and entering other little bungalows or bachelor quarters, some hurrying for the Pacific or Atlantic train. The provisions which the young housewives of the Isthmus found at Uncle Sam's stores were always fresh and wholesome, and Harry enjoyed this pleasant, home-cooked meal immensely.

"Well," said Barney, "Jack knew what the army was when he went into it; he chose his work and now he's got to see it through—same as you and I have."

"Oh, you know it isn't the same as it is with us, Tom. *We* can pack up and go home any time; they wouldn't send bloodhounds after us and throw us into prison."

"They wouldn't send bloodhounds after him, either," Barney laughed.

"Well, but they'd throw him into prison."

"Yes, of course they'd do that."

"If they caught him," ventured Harry.

"Oh, they'd catch him, all right; they make a point of doing that as a matter of principle and discipline. But I'm not so sure but what we'd be deserters, too, if we packed up and went home."

"Yes, but you know, Tom, there are different kinds of desertion."

"No, I don't know that; there's only the one

kind; same as there's only the one kind of stealing."

Mrs. Barney looked at Harry as if to say that it was very hard to argue with her husband.

"I don't like to think of Uncle Sam in that way," said Harry; "hunting a man down for weeks or months and bringing him back by the collar and throwing him into a dungeon. I like to think of him as I saw a picture of him just before I came away—as my boss, with a smile on his bully old face."

"Oh, that's just splendid," said Mrs. Barney; "that's the way I like to think of him, too! I like to think of him as generous and good-natured, as he really is."

"Well, it's good you two don't run the army," commented Mr. Barney. "All Jack Holden has to do is to keep his word with the government and the government will treat him right and keep its word with him, same as it does with me. But he can't do that; he couldn't even keep his word with me. He said he was coming to give the boys a drill, and he didn't show up. Now, a week later, he comes around with the same old story he's always giving the army doctors—sick, sick, sick!"

"Well, you know he *was* sick, Tom."

"They don't seem to think he needs a leave of absence; I suppose they know."

"Where is he quartered?" asked Harry.

"Right up here at Camp Otis; 'tween here and 'Bispo, where they dug the new road."

"Have you always known him, Mr. Barney?"

"Yes, he comes from up our way—Missouri."

"I wish we *could* do something for him," said his young wife.

"Well, we can't. And if I could get him a job as chief engineer of the ditch, that wouldn't let him out of the army. And that's what he's got to learn. He's a nice enough boy, too. All he needs to do is to brace up and make the best of it—stop buying lottery tickets and knock off cigarettes, and keep his word."

While Mr. Barney was getting his Scout Manual, his wife managed to say a confidential word to Harry.

"I do hope you'll get along with Mr. Barney," she said; "he thinks so much of you."

"I didn't know whether he did or not," said Harry.

"Oh yes, he does, but you mustn't expect him to say so—that isn't like him. You have to understand him; he has a very high sense of duty and he's very strict. Sometimes he seems—just a little—heartless, maybe. He hasn't much sympathy with weakness or temptation."

"He says they explain, but they don't justify," said Harry.

"Yes, that's just like him," she agreed; "but you'll get along splendidly; I *know* you will, and so does he."

Mr. Barney, Harry, and little Tom, resplendent and proud in his scout regalia, went over to the Empire Clubhouse, and into a room upstairs where a dozen or so boys were playing games while waiting. It seemed to Harry that several of them were under the scout age limit, and certainly little Tom was; none of them were much above it. They seemed to be all Americans, and Harry supposed they came from family quarters here and there along the line and were the sons of men employed by the Commission.

“Boys,” said Mr. Barney, “I’ve got something to say to you and I want you all to listen. This is Mr. Arnold—Harry Arnold—who comes from Oakdale—or, I mean, Oakwood, New Jersey, to work on the Canal. He’s a sort of assistant scoutmaster up there, knows all about it; and so I’m going to ask him to be the same down here. I don’t mean that he’ll take my place, for you wouldn’t want to have to think that your scoutmaster was a deserter. I’m not that, I hope. But you know how busy I’ve been lately, and even my evenings are often occupied. I’m not sorry I brought you together, and I’m proud of our little troop. I believe the Alligators are as good as any patrol up in the States. And I’m going to continue to be head Alligator. I’ll come to every meeting that I can. But I’m going to ask Arnold to take you in hand and give you the benefit of his experience. He’ll always report to me, and you’ll

know that I'm thinking about you and planning for you even when I'm not on the spot. You can pay him your dues, too. I'm sorry the soldier didn't come to drill you last week, but he may come yet, and we won't think any more about it till we see him."

It was the first time Harry had seen Mr. Barney in a really offhand mood since he had heard him "jolly" the young man about baseball that first day in the train. He was glad to see it, especially after the supper-table talk, and it put him in the same spirit himself. He was not so much in awe of Mr. Barney now as in working hours.

"Scouts," he said, "I never knew till this minute what I was to be, but I *am* a scout and I hope I'm prepared. The best friend I have, the best friend any fellow could have, is a little chap about fourteen up home whom we call our troop mascot, and he's my particular chum—keeps me straight and posted up on the scout law. So I come pretty near knowing tenderfeet and second-class scouts and how to mix up with them. I suppose none of you fellows have passed your first-class tests yet. I may have picked up a few stunts, knocking around the woods, and you're welcome to them, such as they are."

He paused, half doubtfully, with a kind of boyish uncertainty whether Mr. Barney approved of what he was saying, but being encouraged, went on.

"Anyway, I'll do all I can and I guess it will be

as much fun for me as for you. Of course, I don't know how I'll succeed. My friend (Gordon Lord, his name is) says I'm only half a scout anyway because I can't manage the uniform; I've always been a kind of tramp summertimes; but I tell him he's a scout and a half, so that makes two full scouts." (Laughter.) "Anyway, if you really feel you could trust me with weekly dues, I guess I can contrive not to run away with them." (Laughter.) "And, er—oh, there's one more thing, and I'm going to take it right out of Mr. Barney's hands. That's about this soldier boy. I met him to-night, and he's just *got* to come over and give us a drill; we'll make him. I think the reason he doesn't come is that he's afraid of Mr. Barney—" (Great laughter.) "but we'll have to think of a way, as my young chum says, to get him over here. Maybe we could use one of those things they have in the Cut—a—what is it?—a trackshifter, to haul him over. Anyway, now that I'm an Alligator we'll manage it somehow. I suppose I seem like a big fellow to you, but every one around here is calling me 'Kid,' so I dare say I'm not as big as I think I am. Anyway, I love to see parades and soldiers and guns and things—and I love to watch trains come in."

It was needless for him to say more. They were all laughing, even Mr. Barney. And that was a gala meeting. Harry had no end of "stunts" which he put them through, doing them himself to their

great admiration. He made them see if they could stand on one foot, lower the body nearly to the floor, and rise again without ever touching the other foot to the floor; if they could stand for six minutes without moving; if they could hold their left hands in the air ten minutes; and a dozen other things which seem easy until you try them. He measured his lithe, agile form on the floor, gave a twirl, and was up in two seconds without bending his knees. "You have to do it in two seconds," he panted, brushing back the rebellious lock of hair from his forehead. He showed them how wrestling was not so much a matter of strength as a matter of art, which Mr. Barney, assured by his burly frame, denied until Harry put him down by a dexterous twist of the shovelman's wrist, followed by a gentle, but skillful, working under the chin. It was irresistible.

Altogether, it was a delightful meeting. Harry left the hall with his pockets jingling with dimes and nickels; "'Merican money," he laughed to himself, and hurried to catch the last train for Culebra.

Yet one shadow overhung his memory of this pleasant evening—the thought of the young soldier, Jack Holden. Harry felt sorry for him, too. He was so fond of work himself, so naturally faithful and withal so fascinated by military life, that he could not conceive how the service could become irksome. And, though he had quite as strong and

manly a temperament as Mr. Barney himself, still the little vein of sympathy and gentleness running in him enabled him to imagine himself in Holden's place with Holden's weakness. And he did not like to think of Uncle Sam, his boss, in the rôle of detective. He could not get the young soldier's blue, nervous eyes and hesitating smile out of his mind.

But a darker shadow still was to obscure this pleasant evening before he reached home. As he stood waiting for the Panama train and looking down the embankment into the vast Cut (now still and wrapped in darkness), he fancied that he saw something white moving up the slope toward the station. Instinctively, the thought of old "82" down there at the foot of the Cut came to him and he was seized with an impulse to go down and look at her. But several of the scouts who were going over to Panama and Ancon were with him, and not wishing to leave them standing there, he refrained. Then he reflected how silly it would have been to go down, and attributed the impulse to his anxiety that all should go well these last two days of the month. Suddenly he saw that the ascending spot of white was a duck hat.

Two men came up over the embankment, stamped the dirt from their feet, and stood in the darkness away from the station, waiting for the train. When Harry and his young friends were seated, he noticed these two men sitting ahead of him in the almost

empty car. One was rather nattily attired in duck trousers, a blue coat, and duck sun-hat. He was thickly freckled, had a red mustache and red hair, but looked intelligent and alert. The other was in working clothes, and Harry's heart stood still as he recognized him.

It was Kerrigan.

He reached Quarters, and was going upstairs when Van Varick, who was in the Disbursement Office, called through his open door, "Hello, Kid; you getting ready to beat that record?"

"Yes," he answered dejectedly.

When he reached his room he was again accosted.

"Hello, Kid—'eat the record?"

"So you've found my name, too, have you, Cap? Do you think that's the way to talk to your boss?"

He opened the wicker basket; Vasco Nuñez stepped out on the towel-rack and immediately fluffed up his head feathers, holding his head low for Harry to stroke it. Harry cut a piece from a banana and the bird took it in one claw, and holding it thus proceeded to eat it.

"This has been a long day for you, Cap; it's nearly twelve o'clock. You been lonely?"

"*Vaya vd sacarlos de los Estados,*" screamed the parrot.

"Now, I can't understand that, Cap. I wish I had your education. Talk English, please."

The parrot stepped cautiously on to Harry's fin-

ger, and the boy sank down in his armchair, holding the bird near his face and smiling. The parrot cocked his head and looked at him sideways out of one eye.

"Poor Kid," said he.

"Think I've got troubles, Cap?"

"Pretty Kid."

"Well," said Harry, letting the bird push its head up under his chin, and stroking it all the while, "I think you're just as much of a kid as I am; though, goodness knows, I suppose you're old enough to call me kid. How old are you anyway, Cap?"

"Poor balanas—under the—"

"Now, don't begin that, Cap; I've got worries enough to-night. Let's forget our troubles and cheer up."

CHAPTER IX

HARRY RECEIVES FOUR CALLERS

As long as Harry worked on the Panama Canal and for months afterward, the events of that next morning stood out prominently in his memory. He often, in his mind's eye, saw again the picture which confronted him when he went down the embankment, cheerful, confident, and ready for those two last strenuous days on old "82." He had risen early with the thought of this final struggle dominating his mind; his apprehensions of the night before had died away with the bright dawn of another morning, for the first grateful promise of the dry season was now apparent in the sunshine of the early day.

It brought with it to Harry the resolution that the month's record, which had simmered down to a contest between these two monsters, *must* be won. So hopeful did he feel that instead of going down to Empire on one of the dirt-trains in the Cut, he worked off his nervous energy by taking the new road from Culebra to Empire station. He was thinking, as he walked along, how often he had worried without cause; how, after a school examination, he had always lost a night's sleep fearing that

he hadn't passed when all the while he really knew that he had. And so it was now. How absurd had been the cloud of suspicion which he had foolishly allowed to spoil that pleasant evening; how preposterous the thought that anything could happen to disrupt the happiness and good fellowship of "82's" little family. "I suppose," he chuckled, "that Mike will be 'yo-hoing' all day long to keep us hustling."

Then he saw Mike.

Something was wrong. Mr. Barney, in a towering rage, was speaking to the Irishman. The two East Indians stood, like majestic statues, calm and dignified, as if the affair were none of their business.

"Then I want to know," roared Mr. Barney, "how it got there in the cab—if you can answer me like a man!"

Harry dared not ask what was wrong, for the shovelman was too enraged to notice him, and he stood by trembling inwardly, for it looked as if blows were imminent. In Mr. Barney's hand was a charred corncob pipe.

"Well?" he urged.

"Oi'll not talk wid ye," Mike roared back. "Oi'm an honest man!"

There were a ring and a dignity to his illiterate speech that Harry liked. The Irishman, as well as his master, was trembling with rage. Mr. Barney surveyed him from head to foot with a look of un-

utterable disgust. Sickened, Harry cast a nervous glance across the Cut where "101" stood in her cloud of smoke, working up steam.

"You don't know?" mocked Barney, his rage rising. "You—"

The Irishman made a start forward. Harry clutched at his arm, and said quietly, "Don't, Mike."

With a mingling of rage and contempt which made Kerrigan seem like the dirt under his feet, Barney threw the pipe to the ground, where it broke against a rock, and wheeled upon Harry.

"Do you know where the silver quarters in Empire are?"

"I can find them, Mr. Barney."

"Go and find out if this man was out last night and what time he got back."

Harry looked at Kerrigan imploringly. "Mike," said he, "tell him—don't keep anything back; tell him if you were down here last night."

"Can you do as you're told, Arnold?" shouted Mr. Barney.

Harry turned away, but the Irishman's big hand detained him. His arm rested over the boy's shoulder, and Harry stood still and let it remain so.

"Stop a bit, me by; ye needn't go fur to find out. Oi *wuz* here last night. Oi've been here monny a night, an' he knows it, an' he knows why. Oi'll not talk wid him."

"You were here? You admit it?" roared Bar-

ney. "Get out of my sight, you scoundrel! Get your things and get out of here!"

There was a dreadful moment when it seemed as if words were not enough. Harry clutched the Irishman's arm as it left his shoulder.

"Don't, please, Mike," he said. "It won't do any good."

Barney waited as if to invite the blow. Then, suddenly, his rage seemed to freeze. His tone was low, crisp, icy.

"Kerrigan," said he, "you say you came down here last night. Was anybody with you? Don't lie—because I can find out."

"A betther man nor yourself was wid me,—me frind, McConnell."

"I see. You get together all your belongings and get out of here. Don't ever let me see your face again."

For a moment the big Irishman glared at him; then he began to collect his things. It was pathetic to Harry to see him pick up his shovel, his pick, a few odds and ends of working clothes.

"Good-by, me by," he said, extending his hand. Harry grasped it, his eyes filling. Without another word Kerrigan wheeled about and went up the embankment, the boy watching his sturdy, plodding figure until it disappeared.

"Well, Arnold, you want to go with him, or would you prefer to stay and help us out to-day?"

Truly, here was Mr. Barney at his very worst. Yet Harry could not help feeling sorry for him. He followed him up into the engine, and there before him was the cause of the scene he had just witnessed.

"Pretty good job, eh?" said Barney, in ironical disgust.

It *was* a good job, if thoroughness counts for anything. The cylinder-head had been removed, the greasy gasket torn in half and thrown on the floor. There had been no attempt to make it appear an accidental break. It seemed to Harry that if he had done such a thing for such a purpose, he would have removed the head, taken out the gasket, and replaced the head. Then the first sign of trouble would have been a leakage. Or, he might have scraped the gasket on one side to destroy the even pressure of the head and left it where it was. The damage would be effectual, would compass the object (loss of time), and would have been attributed to a worn-out gasket.

"I don't believe McConnell or any other engineer had anything to do with this," thought Harry.

But he said nothing to Mr. Barney. He was sorry now for what he had said the night before, for he felt that he had been the cause of Mr. Barney's suspecting Kerrigan.

"Where did you find his pipe, Mr. Barney?" he ventured to ask after a little while.

"Right there on the cylinder."

"If he came down to see if everything was all right—"

"With McConnell?" Barney interrupted sarcastically.

"It does look strange, Mr. Barney, but mightn't he have left his pipe there before this was done?"

"And some one came along an hour or two later and removed the cylinder head without shaking the pipe off the cylinder?"

"Mightn't they have put it back just to throw suspicion on the owner of the pipe?"

"They couldn't have heard the pipe fall; it would have gone right through that trap into the mud. Come, come, Arnold," he added, with the first welcome dawn of pleasantry. "I thought you were a better scout than that. You talk as if you were trying Kerrigan's case for him in court."

"*Has* he been down here before at night to see if everything was all right, Mr. Barney?"

"Not that I know of—I never told him to. Come now, you let me be captain here like a good boy. Look out and see if the repair train's coming."

Within a few minutes it arrived, and a man hurried over from it bringing the papery material for a new gasket. He laid it on the cylinder and pounded it gently around the edge until the outer rim fell away, leaving the circular gasket. He pressed this with his fingers over the bolt holes until the position and circumference of each one was faintly outlined.

Then with a small hammer he pounded gently around these defining lines, so that the little circular pieces fell away, leaving the bolt holes open. Then he smeared the gasket with graphite and carefully set the cylinder head in place. It was interesting to watch him as he screwed down the bolts. When he had each one screwed down almost to its head, he compared them all carefully, then turned one a little, then the next a little, and so on all the way around, so that they tightened almost simultaneously, securing a uniform pressure. Then, like an artist putting the finishing touch to a picture, he gave this bolt the last turn, then another one, and then another, until the resistance was exactly the same in all of them. Harry would have screwed one down as far as it would go, given it a final and unnecessary wrench, then gone on to the next one.

"You don't see many of these fifteen-sixteenth bolt-heads any more," the machinist observed, as he stuck his wrench in the pocket of his greasy apron.

"No, we're old-fashioned here," answered Barney.

"You see them in the octagons sometimes, but not the square ones."

"You'd better send up some of that stuff," said Barney; "then I won't have to trouble you the next time we need a new gasket."

Mr. Barney walked a few paces with him and seemed to be telling him about what had happened.

Harry was always interested in acquiring odds and ends of information, and he was glad to know how he should go about it when next the little two-horse-power engine of his motor-boat at home needed a gasket; for it was always needing something. But he had noticed something else which he hoped might be of more immediate use. The repair man had put away his wrench without unsetting it. That was natural, Harry thought; hadn't he always done the same? That belonged to the next job.

It was not long before they got old "82" under way, but she had lost about two hours. Two new pitmen were on hand, in fulfillment of a long-standing promise, and the work went along steadily and rapidly. But it was not a cheerful day, and there were none of the usual pleasantries at the end of it. They "turned over thirty-eight hundred and ten cubics," and Harry worked like a Trojan. But the absence of Mike's vociferous "Yo-ho" was felt by all—unless, indeed, by Mr. Barney, who occasionally looked down to give some order to the craneman. He seemed to have forgotten all about the affair of the morning. As nearly as they could find out, they were close upon "101," but there was no telling just how matters really stood.

At night, Harry washed in the Empire Clubhouse and went over to Panama, where he bought a wire cage for Vasco Nuñez and some odds and ends which the government stores' practical stock list did

not include,—one or two pictures for his room, and other things. He did not know just what sort of pictures would be best, so he bought one of George Washington and one of Lincoln, in neat little frames. He also bought an empty photograph frame, intending probably to write to Oakwood for a photograph to put in it. I don't know just what his idea was.

When he climbed the stairs of his quarters, he found two men waiting patiently on the steps of the next flight.

"You boy just came—last mont'?" one asked.

Harry opened his door and in the light which flooded the hall, perceived Mr. Pedro Requelme, of the Balboa Bazaar, and with him the very personage whom he had met on the steamer—he of the Croton-alley eyes, Mr. Alonzo Zamora.

"Ah, yes," said Requelme, following him in; "you same boy. You like Canal, yes?"

"Yes," said Harry, with the characteristic air of half-interest which he often fell into. "Did you want to see me? Won't you sit down?"

"How ees parrot?" asked Requelme.

"Oh, he's pretty well, for an old fellow. I've got him a cage here."

"Cage, yes?" He looked disappointed.

"You no want sell him? Had plenty fun already—yes? He much trouble? He no good talker, hey? No? I take heem back—I haf young

parrot—he talk all time—sing, whistle—he yellow-head—best kind. You change heem?”

“He’d be just as much trouble as this one, wouldn’t he?” said Harry.

“He talk much—Mexican bird—he talk all kind talk—talk much.”

“Well, they say silence is golden,” said Harry.

“Gold? Yes, what? What gold?” said Requelme, quickly.

“Oh, that’s only a saying,” said Harry.

“Loretta, my parrot, he say that?”

“Oh, no, he never mentioned the subject,” said Harry.

The two men watched him keenly as he tore the paper from the cage and, taking Vasco Nuñez from his wicker basket, placed him on the little threshold of his new home. He stepped in upon the perch, investigated both of the empty cups, ventured charily upon the swing, looked about the cage as if he contemplated buying it, returned to the perch, caught sight of Requelme and let forth a piercing shriek.

“That’s all right, Cap,” said Harry, in an undertone. “He can’t get in there. How do you like it?”

But the parrot was too astonished at his sudden acquisition of such sumptuous quarters to talk.

“Did you gentlemen want to see me?” asked Harry again, sinking wearily into a chair.

Zamora, whose little brown eyes had been

watching him intently, now took up the conversation, pulling a chair close to Harry and speaking in a most ingratiating manner. His face was so close that Harry felt an impulse to straighten the spectacles on his fat nose. Up to this point he had been quite at ease with his callers, but now he felt that he must be careful and he was a little nervous.

"He poor man, I'm sorry for him," said Zamora, nodding confidentially toward Requelme; "he hass a fix. Hees daughter, poor girl, she was so fond of parrot. He sell it without her knowing. She tear her hair, and cry, 'Poor Loretta gone.' I say, 'Señorita, my dear, this boy ees American. He haf'—what is it—cheevalry. I will see him. I know the noble Americans. He will sell you back your parrot. I will get him back for you.' That is it, my boy. Poor papa, he is nearly crazy—see? So I gif' you for all your troubles, your cage, your expense and all—I gif' you—twenty-fif' dollar," he blurted out.

He had studied Harry to good purpose and touched him in his weakest spot; not with his liberal offer, but with his picture of the crying, grief-stricken girl.

"I bought him," said Harry, hesitatingly, "because this man, your friend, was banging his head with a lead pencil. I didn't want him."

"Of course not," agreed Zamora. "A boy, he wants no silly pets."

"He'll bang him on the head again, I'm afraid," Harry ruminated aloud.

"He? Ah, no. Do not worry. Poor girl, I would not dare to go back without her precious Loretta! I come from your grand country, you know! I haf' not seen Señor Requielme for years. I say, 'Señorita, we will find that fine boy,' and now I find you are very same boy I met upon the steamer. So you will be good boy, for poor Señorita. You work hard—you haf' no time for parrot. You do good deed—always glad; ees it not so? That ees noble boy!" he added, clapping Harry on the shoulder as he rose.

The boy went over to the table where the new cage stood. Its occupant was standing on one leg, holding in the other the price tag of the cage, which he was trying to detach from its string. He paused and looked at Harry.

"Hello, Kid," said he.

"You're going back home, Cap," said Harry, gently.

"Hurrah for 82!" said Vasco Nuñez.

"This has been a bad day all through, Cap," said Harry, with a break in his voice. "You just tuck your claw up there under your feathers and forget it, and I'll go to bed and try to forget it, too. I'm dead tired, Cap; I was in hopes you might keep me company to-night. But don't you worry any more about the bananas, will you? We

were just beginning to get that trouble off our minds."

He knew now why old John Silver, in "Treasure Island," had a parrot, and why Robinson Crusoe had one, and the man that kept the tollgate near Oakwood, and the lighthouse-keeper down at Barnegat, where he had visited, and scores of other lonely people, who turn to these strange birds as if by instinct. He talked on to the bird in a low tone as he put the paper up over the cage again, and as he did so Vasco Nuñez came over and crowded against the bars and, putting one of his awkward claws out, groped about with it.

"Good-by, Cap," Harry said, taking the claw in his hand. He was holding the paper in place with one hand and reaching for a piece of string with the other, when there came a knock at the door.

"Come in," he said.

The door opened softly and a face peered around the edge of it.

"H'lo, Harry boy," said a comfortable, whimsical voice.

Harry let the paper fall from the cage and rushed forward.

"Hello, Mr. Conne," he said delightedly. "I'm awfully glad to see you."

"Can I come in?"

"I'll drag you in with a derrick if you don't!"

"I see you've got company," said Mr. Conne, glancing at the two men in his funny way. "How'd do, gentlemen. Harry, who's your friend?"

"That? Oh, that's Vasco Nuñez de Balboa."

"*How?*"

"Cap, for short."

"Well, that's some better. He'd fall right off the perch with a name like that first one. When you name a bird, you've got to look out for the center of gravity. I thought all parrots were named 'Polly.' Hello, Polly. Well, Harry, how's the ditch coming on?"

"Oh, pretty good; but you're the first good thing that's happened to-day. It's good for the blues to see you. Just wait till I get this cage wrapped up and I'll be with you. These gentlemen are waiting."

"Working hard?"

"Oh, so-so; this is the hardest thing I've done so far, though."

"Pretty hard thing to wrap up, hey?"

"It isn't that;" and then, as he wound the string around the cage, he told briefly the cause of the strangers' visit, and the little history of Vasco Nuñez de Balboa.

Mr. Conne's face was a study. He looked at Harry, then at Zamora, then at Requelme, then back at Harry, whom he watched closely. Whatever else he suspected, it was plain that he saw

how badly Harry was feeling over the matter. Yet the funny, whimsical look lingered on his face through all, as if it amused him that a parrot could cause such a stir in the world.

"How much is this bird worth?" he finally asked of Requelme.

"Ugh! Two dollar—tree dollar."

"How much do you expect to get for him?"

"Sell heem? No! My daughter, she—"

"I see;" he cut him off and turned to Zamora. "You see the boy doesn't like to part with him," he said reflectively.

"He ees a noble boy, sir."

"Yes," Mr. Conne drawled; "he's a pretty good boy, but kind of credulous and trusting. How old is this weeping maiden?"

Zamora was plainly angry and disconcerted. Requelme started to speak, but Mr. Conne shut him off. "Just let me talk with this gentleman," he said, "and don't interrupt me, please. If you have anything to say, you can say it afterward."

"You—you—are relateev to thees young man?" said Zamora, straightening up in dignity.

"Yes, I'm his great-grandson; how old is this girl?"

"Do you mean to gif' me eensult?" demanded Zamora.

"No, I'm just trying to find out how old the young lady is."

"She ees a mere child, sir—fifteen."

"M-m-m; how long has she had the parrot?"

"She haas grown up with eet; eet had not yet feathered—"

Harry stood listening, the paper fallen away from the cage.

"I see—sort of old school friend, eh? How old is the parrot?" he added, turning suddenly upon Requelme.

"Four—five—"

"Oh, come, he's older than that; see, his claws are black. They'd be white if he was only four or five."

"Maybe, seven—eight."

"I see," said Mr. Conne, comfortably; "you wouldn't be willing to make it fifty, now? Then, you could have the girl about forty-eight or so."

"Señor!" said Zamora, in a dangerously offended tone.

"Now, I tell you what you do," said Mr. Conne, pleasantly, ignoring his theatrical bluster and dignity. "We'll let the boy down easy. You let him keep the parrot to-night, and then to-morrow you send the young lady over to get him herself."

"You theenking I am a liar?" roared Zamora.

"Yes, I think you are," said Mr. Conne, in his crisp, businesslike tone. It was as good as a circus to see them looking at each other, Mr. Conne calm and whimsical, as if he expected Zamora to appre-

ciate the joke of being seen through, and Zamora bursting with wrath.

"Come," he said to Requelme, "we will see about thees;" and the proprietor of the Balboa Bazaar dutifully followed his spokesman from the room and down the stairs with a great deal of noise.

"Nice sort of party to have around the house on a rainy Sunday," commented Mr. Conne; "same old fellow we had on the steamer, isn't he?"

"Yes, Señor," said Harry, amused and relieved.

"What's the matter, Harry?"

"Nothing's the matter."

"Pretty close call, wasn't it?"

"Thanks to you."

"Well, you've got him anyway, haven't you?" he said, placing his arm over the boy's shoulder.

"Harry, you're a funny boy. What'd you ever want to buy him for?"

"I didn't want to, but somehow—"

"I know; funny, isn't it? 'Bout a year ago the boys and I went down to one of those life-saving stations on Cape Cod to film up a little rescue business. The men did the launching stunt for us in a pelting snow. It was great. Then they had us into their little house; we carried Andy Breen in dying—"

"What?"

"We always have Andy to do the dying—he dies great. Well, then we all had some hot coffee.

I noticed a parrot in the corner and I said, 'What in the world do you want that thing for?' 'For company,' says they."

"That's it," said Harry.

"Funny, isn't it?" mused Mr. Conne; "must be something about them. Does he talk, Harry?"

"He says some things in Spanish that I can't understand. Then he has a little English soliloquy that he does, about bananas, or 'balanas' as he calls them, and something about under the 'balana tree.' I think he's had some sorrow or misfortune," he added, laughing.

"Been in the banana business and lost money, hey? Well, Harry, let's hear about the cubic yards and dobie blasts; now, tell me, how many barrels of cement—"

"If you'll be serious a minute and stop guying me, I'll tell you all my troubles."

"That's right. Just shovel them right on to me. I'll be the dirt-train."

It was a pleasant evening, what there was left of it. Mr. Conne, with a twinkle in his eye, produced a snapshot of the "boy hero," as he expressed it, a photograph which George Warren's dexterity had enabled him to get of Harry in the midst of his memorable and much-regretted rescue act. Mr. Conne, who seemed to retain amusing recollections of Gordon, suggested that Harry send him this picture without comment. "Just write on the back

that some one happened to get a snapshot of you when you were doing a noble deed," he said. Harry later forwarded it to Oakwood, where it was received by Gordon with great consternation.

One thing Harry promised to do when his leave time came the following autumn, and that was to accompany Mr. Conne and "the boys" on their expedition into the Darien, which is the name given to the extreme end of the Isthmus, where it joins South America. He had always thought of going home, as so many did, when his six weeks' holiday came, but his parents were in Europe and there was no one in the big old house to welcome him except the housekeeper; so he gave a willing ear to Mr. Conne's alluring picture of a camping trip through the country of the wild San Blas Indians, and a canoe voyage across from the Gulf of Darien to the Pacific.

Mr. Conne, as Harry learned that evening, was the only man of his kind in the United States. His business was unique. And it was a business to win a boy's heart. If Gordon had only known the plain truth about this "deep-dyed villain," how he would have worshiped him! For he was just in Gordon's line; his business was to "find ways." All over the world he was known as a unique specialist whose services were sought for the most adventurous and hazardous enterprises. He did not bother with small things. He would not take the trouble to

“film up” a parade or a burning house, or any other everyday city scene or catastrophe. Not he. He left that to the regular practitioners—the camera men, he called them. But if you wanted a shipwreck in mid-ocean, he would arrange it. If you wanted some reels of the Eskimos on the Coast of Labrador, or the Bushmen of South Africa, he would go and get them. He had a faculty of getting into real railroad accidents, of mixing himself up with dynamite blasts, and coming out of these things with a whole skin. He said he was “guaranteed indestructible,” and he certainly seemed to have nine lives, like a cat.

He was a good judge of men and boys; he had Gordon and Harry both sized up to a T, and he had picked George Warren and Andy Breen because they were “game.” There was not fear enough in the whole trio to supply the requisite amount of timidity for an ordinary rabbit. Mr. Conne had a little office in Chicago, but he was seldom there. There was a young lady in charge, who would tell you that he was in Australia, or Greenland, or the Desert of Sahara, as the case might be. When he was at home there was usually a line of picture men to see him, and menagerie men as well, for he dealt in animals as a side line and would arrange to bring you home a gorilla, or a boa constrictor, or a tiger, but he did not take very much interest in this.

Newspaper correspondents were always glad of

a chance to go with him, but he did not bother much with them. And magazines and publishers were likewise after him for accounts of his adventures. But he never wrote—he had no time. He was a man of actions, not of words. He had not the slightest idea how fascinating his business seemed to others, nor how interesting he was himself. On the door of his tiny office in the big Chicago skyscraper was simply the name,

CARLETON CONNE

No business was given. The public did not know him. They passed to and fro along the hall every day and probably thought, if they thought about it at all, that he was a lawyer, or an insurance broker, or something equally dull and prosaic. But the name of Carleton Conne was known to motion-picture men, to circus men, to natural history museums and associations, the world over. If Harry Arnold had had the slightest idea how the cable and the long-distance telephone were always trying to reach this elusive creature, how scores of men were always trying, failing and trying again, to get in touch with him, he might have appreciated even more than he did, the value and the flattery of the friendship which had been voluntarily offered him. I suppose Mr. Conne had sized up Harry as quickly

as he had sized up Zamora and Requelme (to Harry's amazement). So now the boy found himself promising to accompany this expedition if things came about so as to make it possible.

"Well, good-by, Harry, everything will come right, don't you worry. I guess this—er—Mr. Barney's pretty shrewd."

"He's mistaken—I *know* he is, Mr. Conne."

"Well, he was shrewd enough to pick out Harry boy, wasn't he?"

Harry made no answer to that.

"What do you do with our friend here when the inspector drops in? Won't be much more talking Spanish then, eh? He'll make him *walk* Spanish."

With this parting shot, he took his departure. The next day he and the boys were going to investigate the old Spanish Trail,—a paved way half hidden in the jungle for three hundred years past. Harry envied them.

His rueful musing on Mr. Conne's last words and the doleful picture which they suggested of Vasco Nuñez being compelled to "walk Spanish" from his comfortable new home, were changed to apprehension at the sound of a heavy footfall on the stairs, just as he was preparing to retire. He knew the inspectors were birds of the night; that they were apt to "drop in" wherever they saw a light

burning, and that one stray mosquito would keep a dozen of them busy for a night, searching. Then there came a knock.

“Come in,” he said wearily.

The door opened. It was only Mike.

CHAPTER X

VASCO NUÑEZ DISTINGUISHES HIMSELF

"YUR tired? Goin' ter bed, me by? I seen the light—"

"No, indeed, Mike; you're just the man I wanted to see. Just wait till I take my quinine. Do you find the climate down here makes you lazy, sometimes? I do. I must take my bottle over to mess and get it filled up. I wonder how much quinine Uncle Sam distributes down here. Well, Mike, sit down and make yourself comfortable. This makes three nationalities I've had to-night—Spanish, American, and Irish."

"Oi see ye've a perrit."

"Yes, he's my side-partner."

"Oi onct hed a perrit—only 'twas no perrit, 'twas a cockatoo; thim green perrits is betther."

"You'd prefer the color naturally," laughed Harry.

"Yur a blarney! He'll be after dyin' whin ye take him t' the States. The cloimate'll kill 'im."

"I guess not; he's pretty old, I think."

"He'll die," said Mike, unconvinced, "if he lives long enough."

"Mike, we missed you awfully to-day; it's good to see you."

"Thin ye're not discharged?"

"Discharged! No, indeed; what for?"

"Fer standin' me frind."

"Oh, Mr. Barney's not as bad as all that, Mike."

"Oi'll not hear his name!" cried Mike, indignantly; "but Oi jist wanted ter tell ye thot— Ye don't nade any money, now?" he blurted out. "Well, if he should turn ye out an' ye should nade a bit o' help, Oi hev four hunderd dollars."

"Mike, you're a good friend, and I thank you, but you're not going to do anything for me; I'm going to do something for you—if I can. And don't be afraid of my being discharged and needing money. Mr. Barney couldn't discharge me without reason. Or if he did, I should still be on the payroll. You see, I'm here on Civil Service. I don't belong on his staff, anyway—though I like it," he added, "and I like *him*."

Mike shut his lips tight in silent disagreement.

"Now, Mike, don't look that way, but listen to me. I believe in you. I know you didn't do that thing; and inside of a week you and Mr. Barney are going to shake hands."

"Niver!"

"Oh, yes, you are. We've got to find out who it was, that's all."

"Ye'll niver find out, and thot's the truth."

"Mike, let me tell you something. There was never a crime committed that didn't leave its traces; and there was never a lie told that couldn't be nailed—see? You see, Mike, a lie doesn't fit anything but another lie made for the purpose; but a fact fits every other fact. And a crime doesn't fit in with things, naturally; it's out of place; it doesn't match. And if you study it close enough, you'll find some little telltale thing about that leads somewhere; only you have to use your brains."

Mike listened with respectful attention. "Oi think ye must a' went to the night school," said he, impressed by this manner of reasoning.

"Mike, who was the fellow that Mr. Barney discharged, the one that had a motor-cycle?"

"He would niver—"

"I didn't say he did, but what's his name?"

It did not take Harry long to get the few facts he wanted, though Mike protested and was skeptical. He learned that the fellow's name was Steers, and Mike *thought* he lived in Panama. At least, he had met him there one day. He suspected the fellow was out of work, for he looked shabby and wanted to sell his motor-cycle. That was all Mike knew, but it was enough to send Harry to bed hopeful.

For Harry had not visited Panama City with his eyes shut. He knew that the big staff of canal workers had its sediment which was always sinking to

the bottom; fellows who found the work too hard, the routine and comparative restraint too confining; who, through laziness or incapacity or dishonesty, drifted away from Uncle Sam, and instead of going home, cast their lots with the indolent element of the republic's capital. Here, in truth, was a haven for the weak, the incompetent, those who lacked character and stamina. They herded in a single quarter of the Isthmian city and led a precarious existence, victims of the lazy climate whose effects they had not the will and energy to combat. They could be seen lolling about Independence Plaza, along the shanty-covered sea-wall, at the bull-fights and the lottery. They were the dregs of Uncle Sam's splendid force, a pitiable spectacle. Harry suspected that it was among these he should search.

The next morning, when he reached "82," he looked for the pieces of the torn cylinder gasket. One piece had been crunched up and thrown away; he saw it lying in the Cut. The other had fallen through and lay beneath the shovel. He had brought a copy of the *Canal Record* in his pocket, and he now laid his precious find carefully between its sheets and placed the paper in his locker. It would be a long, hard day, the last one of the month, and he thought as he laid the paper carefully on the shelf of his little closet how the next issue would contain the coveted announcement of the month's record for excavation.

He worked that day as he had never worked before. The work was complicated and delayed by a "baby slide," as Mr. Barney called it, which kept pouring a small but continuous stream of earth and rock on the track ahead, requiring constant clearing all through the forenoon. Later they got beyond its path, and then there was making up for lost time. Old "82" cut her way along, puffing and shaking and loading car after car, train after train.

In the morning Harry had chalked some rocks for dobie blasts and notified the "advance guard" to come back and break them up at noon. A battery of four compressed air-drills (the "advance guard") preceded "82" at a sufficient distance for the larger rocks to be blasted before she reached them in order that she might grapple the fragments in her relentless jaws. Her appetite for rocks had been amply provided for for this day and the next, but some of these fragments proved too large for even her capacious maw and would have to be broken up by dobie blasts.

Every morning Harry went ahead with a piece of chalk, inspecting the blasts of the night before and marking the fragments which he thought should be further broken. Then, at noon blast, the dynamite men would lay a small quantity of powder on the surface of the marked rock, cover it with clay, and discharge it by fuse. This was the dobie blast. In making his inspections Harry had to notice not

only the size of the rock, but more particularly its shape, as the craneman could often handle a large piece more easily than a small one if it were of suitable form. As the blasting men were not supposed to do any work which could be done by a shovel, you will see that some responsibility fell upon Harry and he viewed each rock carefully from every angle. Now and then "82" could not obey his chalk marks, but as a rule, what with shouting and puffing and coaxing, she managed it somehow.

This noontime, however, the dynamite men had not been able to break up all the marked fragments when the whistle blew, and "82" showed her teeth that afternoon, grappling this way and that like a wrestler, tugging, wrenching, and finally swinging almost every mammoth piece, till she seemed an invincible monster.

"Naughty, naughty, to take such big mouthfuls!" called one of Harry's young surveyor friends who was passing with his transit over his shoulder. "Spilled it right on her bib, too," he added, as the rock tumbled off on to the edge of the dirt car, shattering its sides. Mr. Barney, naked from the waist, grimy, and dripping with perspiration, looked out to see who offered the pleasantry, waved his hand to the young fellow, mopped his forehead, and disappeared again. To Harry he seemed like a bronze statue of splendid manhood, the very soul, the spirit, the will of old "82."

If only Mike were there!

They turned out four thousand, six hundred cubics that day. "We've done our best anyway, boys," said Mr. Barney; "we'll see what comes of it."

Harry had certainly done his best; all through that long, hot, toiling day he had thought of the record and of the medal which he hoped to win. Yes, if he said it himself, his weariness, his utter fatigue, his dog-tiredness would confirm it; he had done his best. His service had been *faithful, uninterrupted, satisfactory*.

But he was not to have the blessing of a much-needed slumber. All through that day he had thought also of Mike, poor Mike, and wondered where he was. He washed in the Culebra Club, went to mess early, and by six o'clock was in his room sitting at the center-table with the electric bulb as low as its wire would permit. Before him was the torn piece of gasket from "82's" cylinder. As clear as the type on the newspaper beneath it was a single fingermark imprinted on its greasy surface. He had expected more. He carefully lifted it and turned it over. There was another fingermark, smaller, but in the same position near the edge. Then, suddenly and delightedly, he realized that the very smallness of this clue constituted its value. A number of marks might have been confusing. But these two, a large and a small, on op-

posite sides and opposite each other, proved—what? That they were made by the person who tore the gasket in half! The other thumb and finger were doubtless imprinted on the crumpled half that lay in Culebra Cut. He took a piece of paper and held it as one naturally would when about to tear it. Sure enough!

Inside of ten minutes his precious scrap of gasket was wrapped up and pushed under the bureau where it might remain flat and unharmed, and he was putting on his white duck coat.

“So long, Cap, I’ll see you later,” he said to Vasco Nuñez, who was craning his neck with an oddly inquiring air and watching this hurried and unusual proceeding. “Take a nap; then you’ll feel more sociable when I get back and we’ll have a little chat.”

He caught the next train to Panama. He had never been along the Pacific Division in daylight before, though it was hardly that now. The Cut looked pretty much the same all along, though not as deep as at Culebra where the great Gold Hill was, until they came to the end of it at Peter McGill,¹ where a crowd of weary, grimy toilers got on. Here was the great concrete cañon which would form the Pedro Miguel locks, two side by side; then the train crossed a marshy space which would later be Mira-

¹ Pedro Miguel, but universally dubbed “Peter McGill” by the canal workers.

flores Lake, a sort of widening of the Cut at its end; then stopped at Miraflores, where one of the great dumps was located, and where the other flight of Pacific locks (a double pair) would raise and lower vessels to and from ocean level. They looked much like the locks at Gatun, although they were not as near completion. There, you will remember, the three pairs adjoined, while here a single pair was at Pedro Miguel and two pairs a little farther on at Miraflores. From Miraflores a straight waterway ran to Balboa, a mile or two from Panama City, where the canal entered the Pacific.

It was about dark when Harry alighted at Panama and made his way to the Young Men's Christian Association Clubhouse. He had to cross the Plaza, where the Cathedral stood, and here on a corner building he saw a large sign, LOTERIA DE PANAMA. There was a surging crowd about it, negroes, Spaniards, some Chinese, and a few ne'er-do-well-looking Americans. On a park bench near by sat several people, apparently waiting for something; one, a young fellow in a decent suit whose head was buried in his hands. Some of the waiting people clutched strips of paper printed in separate, detachable coupons like rows of ferry tickets, and talked excitedly with each other. It was a pathetic sight, for all these people were hoping to get money without earning it, on the mere possession of a lucky number. Some of them had a

string of fifty or more coupons. All seemed nervous and in suspense,—especially the women, some of whom held babies in their arms.

Harry knew that the lottery was a lawful institution of the Panama Republic, but it held no temptation for him. If he had come by any money in such a way, he would have felt that he had stolen it, that those poor, ignorant Spanish women with babies in their arms had furnished it. He looked curiously at this sordid spectacle as he elbowed his way through. There were sneers and lowering glances from some who moved to let him pass, and one man said, "Ugh, he no right down here, plenty room home;" which seemed strangely inhospitable, whether it referred to his presence in the crowd or on the Isthmus, for Harry knew that there would have been no Republic of Panama if it hadn't been for Uncle Sam; that Uncle Sam had been the good angel of this little nation's being. As a province of Colombia she had rebelled and Uncle Sam had guaranteed her independence. This was a pretty *good turn*, to use the scout phrase, and deserving of a better courtesy than Americans often encountered at the hands of the new republic or of her people generally.

As every boy should know, the new Panama Republic sold to Uncle Sam what is known as the Canal Zone, a strip of land ten miles wide across the Isthmus, and this strip is controlled absolutely by

our good old uncle. The cities of Colon and Panama are in the Zone, but still a part of the Panama Republic. Uncle Sam, however, procured the privilege of paving their streets and cleaning them, and he straightway proceeded to give the capital city such a general shaking up as it had not known since the English buccaneer, Sir Henry Morgan, descended upon it in the year 1671. But the citizens had grown fond of their little pools of stagnant water, their cherished refuse heaps, and pet mosquitoes; and when, to their consternation, they beheld their treasured mud being ousted in favor of paving-stones they felt that the day of their glory was over and that Panama, for the first time in all its long history, was going to have an American bath and be kept clean.

Down one of these renovated streets Harry hurried, proud of his country which knew how to throttle cholera and yellow fever as it had known how to throttle the hills and the jungle.

At the Young Men's Christian Association Clubhouse he asked for trace of a fellow named Steers who used to work in the Cut. The man looked over his lists but could find no such name, although they did their best to keep track of former workers who had not gone home. There was nothing to do but to go into the American quarter, not the one up on the hill at Ancon, where many of the canal men lived, but in the squalid quarter where failure,

idleness, and dirt fraternized. For Harry had sized up his quarry; he knew that a bungling act for childish revenge would come from just such creatures as peopled the neighborhood he was seeking.

He passed through narrow streets, scarcely more than alleys, but clean and orderly. Above the narrow, paved walks balconies projected, some of them almost meeting from opposite sides, and from those just above him he could hear Spanish women singing and gossiping. All sorts of Spanish signs confronted him, and now and then a merchant lolling in his doorway tried to lure him in to trade. The interiors of the lower floors, which were visible to the passer-by, revealed a picture of indolence strangely in contrast with the life of the canal force, even in its leisure hours. People sat about on the floor smoking cigarettes and playing cards, seeming but half awake. On every hand were colors which had once been gorgeous, but were now faded and dirty. It would have been a pleasure to see another white duck suit.

He passed through the Calle Bolivar and presently found himself in the little colony he sought. He knew it by the signs in English. The homely American words, "Board and Lodging," stared him in the face. From one of these poor places to another he went, canvassing for the person he wanted. He was met by slatternly women who sent him from house to house with encouraging hints and half-in-

formation that proved fruitless. One *thought* there was a Steers across the way, but it turned out to be a Sears. Another had known a Seering that used to be in the Disbursement Office at Empire. Another was *sure* she knew whom he meant—the young man over at Señor Piza's. At Señor Piza's they told him the young man had died of malaria and that his name was Daggett. And so it went.

But Harry was not one to despair. He finally decided that the name of Steers was not the magic word to work with. It led him to Joneses, McCarthys, Stewards. So he concluded to conjure with the word *motor-cycle* and to use no name. A filthy little mulatto urchin knew the fellow well. He lived at the "President Roosevelt," kept by Wingate's widow. So Harry rooted out the widow and found that the motor-cycle was a phonograph, and the owner's name was Connor. Foiled again! But "Wingate's widow" had a word to say; the "Snorer" across the street had a boarder who had a steam-shovel. He suspected that the "Snorer" might be a Señora, and that if a phonograph could be a motor-cycle, then why might not a motor-cycle be a steam-shovel? At all events, since nobody cared anything for names, why, anything could be anything—as in "Alice in Wonderland."

He decided not to waken the "Snorer" at such a late hour, but suddenly the brilliant thought came to him that perhaps the "Snorer's" boarder had

worked on a steam-shovel. That was it, surely! Happy thought! But the Señora herself dispelled this vision. From her balcony she acknowledged having "plenty 'Merica gentlemens," but none with a bicycle, and a steam-shovel! "No-o-o-o!" she shook her head emphatically. Harry believed her. One more cast of the dice and he would go home, for it was getting late. He accosted a negro.

"Do you ever see any one around here with a bicycle?" he asked; "sort of two wheels with some machinery between?"

"Huh, plenty," the negro laughed, showing all his teeth. "Him make plenty noise—yas?"

"That's he," said Harry, delighted.

He walked a few steps with the negro, who volunteered to point out the house. He was to turn one corner, then another, till he came to a store with monkeys and Panama hats in the window. He gave the laughing negro a dime and hurried on.

"I bet it's a baby-carriage or a wheelbarrow," he speculated.

But it was neither, and the negro's description of a motor-cycle was complete and eloquent; Harry would have gone almost to the ends of the earth on the strength of it,— "Him make plenty noise." It must be either a motor-cycle or a steam-shovel, in very truth.

It was not a pleasant house which he entered, but squalid, dark, and with that strange odor from cook-

ing which pervades none but Spanish houses. Yes, there was a fellow there who had a motor-cycle, but his name was Varick, and he was not at home. His locked door at the end of the dark hall made this plain. But Harry resolved to wait. Such a fellow might have changed his name. He went out and sat on the doorstep, close to the walk. It was after ten o'clock, and he would wait until time for the next and last Atlantic train at eleven-two. Through the open windows opposite there floated out the strains of a mandolin intermingled with the rich, languid voices of singers. Harry was glad he could not see the inmates, for he did not like the looks of these people; but the music was delightful and might have lulled him to sleep.

It seemed strange for him to be sitting on this curbstone late at night amid such strange scenes and unfamiliar people, so far from home. It might have been Spain in the old days. It seemed scarcely credible that within a mile or two of these scenes of care-free languor and old-world ease and negligence, the sturdy, practical, indomitable spirit of Uncle Sam was hewing a way through the jungle. It was a great thing, thought Harry, to have some serious business in the world and to be about it. What a contrast between Mr. Barney and these people. Here they were idling on their couches, while Uncle Sam was cleaning up their city for them. First and last, Harry was "mighty glad" he was

“from the States.” His thoughts were just running to Oakwood, to Gordon and the troop and Dr. Brent and the Danforths, and he was wondering why Marjorie hadn’t written lately, when he became conscious of a group approaching. They were all young men and none of them wore white, as he did. Some seemed to be Spanish, others American. One of these latter was saying that Henriquez was no good as a teaser, that Joe was better, and that if Joe had had that beast in hand he (the speaker) would have money in his pocket. Another said that bull never got mad anyway; and another said there was a pretty good crowd, mostly “Spiggoties.”¹ Harry concluded they were returning from a bull-fight. The very thought of the disgraceful entertainment sickened him, and he felt humiliated to think that any of Uncle Sam’s nephews could find enjoyment in it.

The fellow who had criticised Henriquez left the others and turned in at the door.

“Excuse me,” said Harry, rising, “is your name Varick?”

“Why?”

“I understand you have a motor-cycle you want to sell.”

“Oh, yes, come in; you saw the ad?”

Harry had seen no “ad,” but he did not answer. The young man led the way through the darkened

¹ Popular name for the native laboring classes.

hall and, unlocking his door, ushered Harry in and lighted a small hand lamp. He was a thick-set fellow, strong and muscular. He wore a dark suit of clothes, a stiff white shirt, but neither collar nor tie. Though his face was vulgar and unkempt, he seemed inclined to be sociable.

"Pretty poor scrap to-night," he said, wheeling the motor-cycle out from a corner.

"I don't go in for that much," said Harry, hoping to avert a narration of its disgusting particulars.

"Object?"

"Yes."

"It's good sport, old man; nobody down here objects."

"You haven't asked the bulls what they think, I suppose?"

"Cut it out, cut it out!" said the fellow.
"You're new on the ditch?"

The only satisfaction Harry got for his pains was the knowledge that the fellow regarded him as a tenderfoot. He said no more, but fell to examining the wheel.

"How much do you want for it?"

"I'll let her go for thirty. I'm busted; want to get back to the States."

Harry examined it carefully, while its owner examined *him* carefully.

"Tools go with it?"

"Sure."

"May I see them?"

"Sure."

He dumped the contents of the tool-box on the floor.

"No wrench?" asked Harry.

"Sure," said the fellow, reaching it down from a shelf. Harry noticed that it was not with the other tools. More particularly, he noticed that its jaws were far apart. He examined the motor-cycle carefully and satisfied himself that it did not contain a fifteen-sixteenths nut, nor any nut nearly as large as that. The young fellow went to a closet to get the pump, and Harry hastily took from his pocket a card on which he had marked a space fifteen-sixteenths of an inch long. This he laid against the wrench and found, to his satisfaction, that it had been set for a nut of that size. To be sure, it had been opened a little beyond that width, probably to release the nut, but the significant facts were, first, that it was not with the other tools, and second, that the motor-cycle contained no nut larger than a five-eighths.

The young man entered into an extravagant enumeration of the wheel's merits, and Harry followed with his eyes to every point of superiority.

"Does the carbureter flood all right?"

"Does she? Look here."

He manipulated the cork float, by way of demonstration.

Harry asked about this and that, the timer, the muffler, the electrical connection, the gas tank. "Isn't that rather loose?" he finally asked, taking hold of the chain. It left his fingers greasy, as he had hoped it would.

"Loose?" said the owner; "guess you never rode one, did you? You want it loose like that," he added, lifting it by one of its links.

With delight Harry saw his greasy thumb and forefinger.

"Well," said he, rising, "I just wanted to see it; I'll have to think it over. Likely as not, I'll be back. Suppose you just put the address on this card so I'll remember it; I had a tough job finding you."

The young man was plainly disappointed. He offered the wheel for twenty-five dollars without the tools or twenty-eight dollars with them. But it was of no use. With an ill grace he took the card and wrote his name and address.

"You'll never find another bargain like that," he commented, "and I wouldn't offer it either, to you or anybody else, if I wasn't all in. If I had thirty plunks to-morrow, I could turn them into a hundred."

"Lottery?" asked Harry.

"No, not lottery—I know a game that'll beat that—beat the Canal, too. They're a lot of stiffs and rah-rah boys on the Canal; I can tell you that

right now. You won't get a square deal. You can take that from me."

It was not pleasant to talk with him, nor to listen to him, and Harry hurried away.

That night, in his room, he compared the marks on the gasket with the marks on the card, paying especial attention to the thumb-marks, for these, he had read, were more reliable than the others. He studied them under the light with a magnifying glass, Vasco Nuñez, rudely awakened from his nap, watching this mysterious midnight proceeding with a look of polite curiosity, occasionally giving a shrill whistle to attract his master's attention. When Harry "turned in" for a brief rest, he was satisfied that the fingers which had returned to him the card that night were none other than the ones that had torn in half the cylinder gasket on old "82."

He slept fitfully and had a strange, nervous feeling all night; but when he awoke and dressed he was calm and resolved. He caught the five-two train for Panama and soon found himself knocking on the door of his new acquaintance. That personage had not yet arisen, but on hearing who was at the door he dressed hastily and opened it. In the daylight Harry saw him better. He was unshaven, unsightly. His ruffled hair and sleepy aspect gave him an appearance of shiftlessness which was not agreeable to see.

"I thought you wouldn't let her slip, pal," he said.

Harry sat down on the edge of the disarranged bed and spoke in the half-careless tone which was characteristic of him, but in a manner that precluded discussion or denial. It took the fellow's breath away.

"Varick," said he, "or whatever your name is, I've got to be at work not later than eight o'clock. Last night you gave me my choice of buying that machine, with or without the tools. Now, I'm going to give you your choice of two things. You can get your hat on and come along with me now down to Culebra and confess to Mr. Barney the contemptible revenge you tried to take on him night before last. I'll promise you nothing will happen to you; he wouldn't go to the trouble of kicking you off the shovel—see? The other thing is—now wait a minute, till I finish, you can't scare me—the other is to deny you did it. In that case you go to the Panama jail or the Ancon Hospital. Now, just a minute—for your own sake. *You* don't count for anything with me. I don't care anything about your being punished. You don't suppose I got up at four o'clock to waste time on you, do you? A friend of mine has got himself suspected of doing your work. And let me tell you, too; you don't suppose I'd charge you with this on the strength of what some little bird told me, do you? I've got the facts that will send you to jail. Another thing—before you start a circus. You don't suppose I'd come back

down here among these back-stabbing Spaniards if I was afraid of them, do you? Or of you? So don't waste time; which will you do?"

There was no anger in his voice and no trace of fear; only a touch of careless disgust.

They both edged toward the door. Harry was about to plant himself before it when the other jostled him and grabbed him by the collar. There was a moment's struggle until Harry could free himself and get his distance. Then he let fly a blow which sent Steers, or Varick, reeling against the table, which he vainly tried to grab, but slid down, upsetting the motor-cycle, and lay flat on the floor.

Harry had hoped that this would not be necessary. His victim lay a moment stunned; just as he started to rise there were hurried steps on the stair, confused voices, and the door opened admitting two half-dressed Spaniards, one of whom carried a knife.

Harry was somewhat shaken up from the force of the blow he had given, but he was not nervous and he stood straight and manly, his handsome face flushed, brushing back the rebellious lock from his forehead.

"What ees trouble?" demanded one of the newcomers, with a lowering glance at Harry.

"Tell them, if you want to," said Harry, carelessly, to the rising figure, "but you'd be better off not to; one of them will be blackmailing you first

thing you know." He cast a sneering look at the knife, then up at its owner's face.

"What ees trouble?" the foreigner asked again, menacingly, of Harry. "You come here—"

"That's all right," said Steers, getting to his feet and breathing hard. "It's just between us two—just a—just a—misunderstanding," he panted. "Come on, pardner, let's get out o' this."

Without another word he completed his hasty toilet, and Harry watched him with a touch of sympathy as he bathed the part of his face where he had been struck.

"It was your own fault," said Harry.

"That's all right, pal; I didn't size you up right."

The whistle had blown and the men were at work when the two young men scrambled down the embankment toward "82." It had been a constrained and uncomfortable journey, for Steers' disposition to ignore his contemptible act and to make light of his morning's experience, seeking to obliterate it in friendly, familiar talk, made him seem little less than abhorrent to Harry. He appeared to feel neither remorse for the one nor humiliation at the other. He spoke of the blow he had received as if he and Harry had been disinterested witnesses of a fight.

"You've got that upper-cut fine," he said.

Harry had ignored this remark; for, in plain

truth, he did not know a blow by such a name, and he did not feel that the unpleasant necessity which had confronted him was a thing to be talked about. That Steers, being its victim, could now discuss its scientific points, made him repugnant in Harry's eyes.

They hopped up on "82" and into the engine.

"Mr. Barney," said Harry, "this fellow wants to speak to you. Go ahead, Steers."

He waited to see how Steers would begin and then jumped down, for he did not wish to add one particle to the embarrassment of either. In a few minutes Steers came down and started up the embankment.

"So long, pal," he called to Harry.

Harry went to work as if nothing had happened. After a few minutes Mr. Barney called George up from the crane and got down himself. Perhaps it was the pleasant anticipation in Harry's mind which this unusual proceeding confirmed, but to him Mr. Barney had never looked so straightforward, so bluntly honorable, so certain of himself and of the path of duty, as he did now. Splendid in his burly manhood, with a face whose force and character no grime could hide, he seemed worthy to be a right-hand man of Uncle Sam,—the boss of old "82."

"Arnold," said he, "you hop up there in the crane and be careful. I've got to do an errand up the bank."

It was the first time he had ever left "82" during working hours. In an hour he was back—with Mike.

"Boys," said he, "those of you who heard the disturbance the other day, I want you to listen. I misjudged this man. I've asked him to come down here so I could make an apology to him before all of you. And that I do," he added, turning to Mike. "It's the best I can do—though it isn't much. This boy here," he went on, indicating Harry, "had sense enough to give this matter calmer thought than I did. He went to work, found a clue, and brought—well, you saw whom he brought here this morning. Poor wretch!—I've got a little duffer home, and if he grows up with a good, clear brain and a pair of eyes and a heart like Arnold's, I'll be satisfied. Mike, will you shake hands?" he said heartily, holding out his own.

The Irishman did not move, and there was an awkward pause.

"Yur roight in wan thing, sir," said Mike, with an air of dignified contempt, "in what ye've said about the by."

"Well, the boy wants you to shake hands, don't you, Harry?" It was the first time he had called Harry by his first name.

"Yes, indeed, I do," said Harry, earnestly.

"Come, Mike," said Barney, extending his hand again, "for the sake of old 82."

Mike hesitated a moment; then, with all the warmth of his generous nature, he grasped the shovelman's hand and shook it heartily.

Across the cut "101," her steam up and her work well under way, lay buried in her black cloud.

But the black cloud had risen from "82."

The day was memorable to Harry for one other reason. He often thought afterward how mere chance and a careless word had set in motion a whole train of developments, as a line of dominoes goes down when the first one is toppled over. It was the first day of the month, and the pay-train came along. It was wonderful what an air of joviality and good-feeling the pay-train diffused. All through the morning Mike had worked hard and faithfully, but without contributing his cordial "Yo-ho." But the pay-train dissipated any lingering feeling of resentment his stubborn nature may have entertained. For the jingle of gold put every one in good humor, and so Harry was glad that it happened to be pay-day.

To look at Empire station you would have thought there was a ball-game or a circus going on. On every roof and cornice and shed were perched the waiting men. They crowded at the platform, laughing and talking. Hard by stood the train with its fifty-six or more tons of gold and silver coin under

military guard. Inside it were little piles and miniature mountains of the glittering specie. What Harry got seemed very small in comparison with the store from which it was taken, but it was good pay for a boy of his age and he had earned it. Whenever the pay-train came it reminded him to ask himself whether his work were faithful and satisfactory. Of course it had been uninterrupted, and would continue to be. What could interrupt it? He had never been even late except this very morning, when he came down with Steers half an hour after starting time.

He had a little chamois bag with the monogram H. A. worked on it, which had come by mail from Oakwood after he had mentioned in a letter to Marjorie Danforth that he was paid in gold. Into this he poured his treasured coins.

When he reached home, the success and happiness of that gala day when all had gone so well impelled him to vent his cheerfulness in a kind of airy gaiety, which Vasco Nuñez observed with attentive, but unruffled, inquisitiveness, as if he thought it might be the first symptom of insanity, and were well worthy of being quietly studied.

"Hurrah for Uncle Sam!" he finally ventured, as if to test Harry's tottering senses.

"You bet, Cap! Mike's back, too—yo-ho ho-o-o! Look at that! Do you see that, you old grouch? That's gold—that's a bag of gold!"

The parrot craned his neck to see. He would not give an opinion offhand and then regret it.

"That's the kind of an uncle I've got, Cap; gives me bags of gold!"

The pupils of the parrot's eyes contracted till they were mere specks, then enlarged, then contracted again. Harry had noticed this before when the bird had essayed a new word or when food was approaching, but never so continuously and pronouncedly as now.

"Bags of gold," he said, "under bal-al—"

"Now don't begin that, Cap," said Harry.

"Balboa's tree," said the parrot, with an air of decision, as if no further argument would be considered. Then he settled himself and began preening his feathers, as if he cared nothing whatever for the world's opinion of his announcement.

"What, Cap?" said Harry, curiously. "That's something new."

"Pretty Kid," said the parrot, finally.

It was the joy of his life to jolly Harry.

CHAPTER XI

“ CLEMENTINA, 'FORTY-NINER ”

It had never occurred to Harry to suspect that Requelme's desire to have his parrot back arose from any deeper motive than an opportunity to dispose of it at a fancy price. Indeed, he had not suspected that much until the opportune interference of Mr. Conne put it into his head. He knew that parrots and monkeys and even baby alligators constituted a never failing lure to tourists, and that a flourishing and amazingly profitable trade was carried on in this variety of tropical souvenirs by the crafty merchants of Panama.

As for Vasco Nuñez himself, his accomplishments fell into three divisions: the few English words he knew when Harry bought him, a rather extensive Spanish vocabulary which Harry did not understand, and the new words and phrases he had learned from Harry. He was, indeed, quite proficient in the foreign tongue, in which his enunciation was more expressive and clear than in English, and it exasperated Harry and made him feel quite ignorant and inferior when the bird would lower his head in a politely condescending way from his favorite place

on the clothes-tree, and solemnly observe, "*Seis cientos fusiles,*" or "*El momento oportuno ha llegado de golpear,*" and then settle himself comfortably and close his eyes with an air of complacence as if he were perfectly willing that Harry should consider these posers at his leisure. "*Vaya Vd. sacarlos de los Estados,*" he would also observe, and sometimes, when he was in a talkative mood, he would call, "*Premestamente la Espada, después Votos,*" over and over again, till Harry would give him a piece of cocoanut to keep him quiet.

It seemed as if the bird's occasional soliloquy about bananas, or "balanas," must be a remnant of an earlier vocabulary, something he had learned away back in the A B C period of his career which had grown hazy and jumbled in the lapse of many years, since he had "taken up" Spanish.

Since the night of that memorable pay-day, not one word had he condescended to utter about Balboa's tree, though other pay-days had passed and he had been encouraged to become confidential by more than one reminding glimpse of his master's little bag of gold. Of one thing Harry grew almost certain, and that was that "balana" had been not simply a mispronunciation of banana, but a groping after a once familiar word of which banana reminded him and with which it had become jumbled and confused. This word was evidently "Balboa."

From being first simply amused, then curious,

Harry had at last begun to wonder whether there might possibly be some remote significance in all this hodge-podge about a tree, when something happened which convinced him that Vasco Nuñez had played some important part in the affairs of certain individuals, if not in the affairs of nations. Apparently it had been his cruel fate never to be fully understood; his doleful reminiscences about the bananas and the tree had fallen on deaf ears in the hovel of Requielme, and though he had the full sympathy of his new and kinder master in these troubled memories, Harry was all at sea when the parrot launched forth in vehement Spanish.

The first year of the boy's work on the Canal was drawing to a close, and his hard-earned six weeks' leave was near at hand. "We'll take care of you," Mr. Conne had said, and Harry was looking forward to his trip with that engaging friend and "the boys." "82" had won the record that first month, then had fallen behind for several months, and was now creeping perilously near the summit figure of "49" (a new gladiator in the field). The sanitary inspector had come and gone and Vasco still held his ground, or, rather, his perch. The "office," seeing no way to get rid of Mr. Barney but to comply unqualifiedly with his request, had put Harry regularly on the "line staff." Jack Holden and Harry had become fast friends; Harry was fond of visiting Camp Otis, where Jack was

quartered, and Jack had been over once, twice—oh, several times, to drill the scouts. The coveted medal loomed larger with each day of honest hard work that Harry did. All the scouts at home in Oakwood were waiting for a sight of the precious award; he had written about it, of course, and Gordon had replied that he would “be there to see Harry receive it.” Marjorie Danforth had acknowledged the information by writing that it was *perfectly glorious*, and that he mustn’t *dare* to come back without it.

So, first and last, things were going well when one fine morning Harry received by mail a card stating that a special entertainment would be given on a certain evening at the Y. M. C. A. Clubhouse in Panama City. It was a kind of card in common use for such purposes in the Zone, especially to notify non-residents of an approaching function in this or that town, and was engraved with spaces left to be filled in for the particular affair, date, town, and so forth. Such invitations had come to him before from Miraflores, Empire, and other towns along the line, and he had always availed himself of the hospitality of those kindly men who were doing so much to make the Isthmus seem a home to Uncle Sam’s army of toilers, and to encourage intertown friendship and sociability.

On his way downstairs he saw Tom Bonney’s door open and stepped in. Tom was standing in front of his dresser arranging his tie, for being a surveyor he

could take some thought to his appearance through the working day. He was short and stocky and stood very straight, and his face was as round and jolly as Humpty-Dumpty's. Merrick and Walters, rodmen whose room was across the hall, were there waiting for him.

"H'lo, Kiddo," said Bonney, never so much as turning.

"Going to the racket over in Pan?" asked Harry.

"What racket's that?"

"Y. M. C. A.—Saturday night."

"Never touched *me*."

"Didn't you get a card, honest?"

"No, but then, plain people like Merrick and Walters and me don't expect to be sought after like Harry boy."

"Didn't any of you get cards?" Harry asked, incredulously.

"No," drawled Tom, "and we're just too mad for anything. I know what makes Harry boy so popular in 'sassiety'; it's that pretty way he has of brushing back that lock of hair—you just can't make it behave, can you, Kid? Show Merrick how you do it."

"Oh, cut that out!" said Harry.

"Can you answer this?" said Tom, looking steadily in the glass and wrenching his tie this way and that; "if the weight of all the concrete in Gatun

Dam is three million tons, how much would the spillway? ”

“ No wonder you’re not invited around,” said Harry, “ if you spring things like that.”

“ Here’s one Colonel Gorgas asked President Taft when he was down here,” said Tom, still busy with his tie. “ If—”

But Harry did not wait to hear it. He hurried from the room with his hands clapped to his ears, which was his usual mode of retreat when Tom began to bombard him with “ daffodils.” But he wondered why it was that this trio had not received invitations, for if any fellow was popular in the Zone, Tom was; his round, merry face was to be seen everywhere.

At noon he lunched at the Empire mess and mentioned the Y. M. C. A. affair to the little party of Administration clerks who had their table in a cosy recess of the porch, and who were always glad of his company when he ate at Empire.

“ I understand 82’s falling off,” one mischievously observed, as Harry approached.

“ Wonder what’s the matter with her; she used to be a queen,” another added.

“ Poor management, I guess. Oh, hello, New Jersey, I didn’t see you!”

“ Sit down here, friend Harold; how’s your feathered friend these days? Where you been eating lately? ”

They always "jollied" Harry about "82," but he didn't mind it.

"Say, Michigan,"¹ said Harry to a young man in a silk outing shirt, "what are you going to wear to the racket over in Pan?"

"What racket, my fraptious boy?"

"Didn't *you* get one, either?" asked Harry, in incredulous surprise and showing his card. They all disclaimed the honor.

"You're getting *turrible* popular, Harry."

"How's your friend, the soldier boy, Harry?" asked another, helping him to some potato.

"Oh, he's pretty well."

"They tell me you're getting to be the teacher's pet over at Camp Otis, Harry."

And so the desultory talk ran on, interrupted now and again by the roar of the noon blast, the dishes on the table rattling from the force of the more powerful explosions.

"I seem to be the only one down this way favored by the Pans," thought Harry, as he went back down to "82."

On Saturday evening he put on a light-weight suit of soft white flannel with a faint stripe running through it, donned his raincoat, and caught the seven-two train for Panama.

There was no sign of an entertainment at the

¹The members of the canal force represented nearly every state and city in the Union, and in the familiar parlance of the "big camp" were often dubbed according to the state or town from which they hailed.

Clubhouse. People were passing in and out as usual; there were loungers in the rooms, but no indication that any special affair was at hand. So finally he asked, and was told that nothing was scheduled for that night. He went away feeling like a fool and wondering whether he were the victim of a practical joke. There was nothing to do in Panama; its public diversions did not interest him. He wandered through the Plaza, lolled on one of the benches and listened to the band for a while, then just as he was about to go home, a happy thought struck him. He would go up Ancon Hill and call at the Tivoli. He did not think there was one chance in a hundred of Mr. Conne's party being there, for he knew they were camping back in the brush most of the time, and as likely as not would be up in Costa Rica or down in Colombia. But he followed the road up the long slope till the city lay clear beneath him, its tiny lights reflected in the Pacific, so that it looked double its size.

At the Tivoli (Uncle Sam's large hotel), he was delighted to learn that the trio was there for the week-end. He found them in their suite of rooms, surrounded by photographic and sketching paraphernalia and the enchanting disorder suggestive of hasty comings and goings, with the smack (so dear to Harry) of "roughing it" and camp life. Maps and charts littered the floor, and on a table where several well-worn books lay, there were a couple of

keenly sharpened machettes¹ which had evidently seen hard usage. Andy Breen and George Warren were on the floor poring over a map, while Mr. Conne reclined in an easy chair, his feet on the center-table, reading. They were all delighted to see him.

"We just dropped into town after our mail and to get our pill-box filled up," Mr. Conne explained. "We carry our shot in one cigar-box and our quinine in another; the other day George filled a jaguar with thirty grains of quinine by mistake—made him so nervous and dizzy he fell right off a limb and we got him alive. What are you all dressed up for, Harry?"

Harry explained.

"Huh, practical joke, eh? Well, I'm glad of it because it brings you here. We're just sort of mapping out our Darien trip. How's old Forty-'leven these days?"

"82?" laughed Harry.

"And Blarney?"

"Oh, Mr. Barney? He's all right—he's great; we're a happy family over there."

"Regular ring-around-the-rosy, hey?"

"They say there's lots of mud-slinging along the Cut," observed Andy Breen.

"That's a joke, Harry," said Mr. Conne.

¹ *Machette*: a short knife used in cutting away the jungle; a sort of cross between a hatchet and a cutlass.

"Andy's been that way ever since he had malaria. Sit right down on those snow-clad peaks, Harry."

Harry removed a map of South America from a chair.

"And tell me about our old college chum, Balboa. Any more visits from your friend Vesuvius?"

"No."

"Weeping maiden never showed up, eh?"

"Haven't seen her."

"Probably drowned in her own tears. Well, how's Balboa?"

"Oh, he's pretty well; he's a mystery to me, though. Sometimes he talks Spanish and I can't understand him, and he keeps up that old gag about the balana tree, but I think I've got that translated. One day I showed him my pay and he said as plain as could be, 'Bags of gold under Balboa's tree.'"

"Get out—the plot grows thinner."

"But I haven't been able to get him to say anything more about it. When I try to, he calls me 'Kid,' or just sits there pecking at his perch."

"Says nothing, but gnaws wood, eh?"

"Once he said, 'Red bananas under Balboa's tree'; that's about the most he's ever said on that mysterious subject."

Mr. Conne looked amused. "You don't suppose he's got something up his sleeve now, do you, Harry?"

"I don't know, but I wish you'd be serious—for

once," said Harry, laughing in spite of himself. "Do you know, Mr. Conne,—I suppose you fellows will laugh when you hear this,—but if I didn't know that the old Spanish gold days were four hundred years gone, I'd believe that—but, of course, I know even a parrot couldn't be that old."

"*What* would you believe?"

"Oh, there's no use telling you; you'd just guy me."

"Go ahead," said George Warren, "he was born that way, he can't help it."

Mr. Conne took this dig with a mischievous smile, and looked at Harry in a tantalizing way. "Go on, Harry, let's have it."

"I will not."

"Oh, you just want to be coaxed."

"Well, I tell you what," Harry blurted out; "I'd believe that bird knows some secret—only—"

"Only for that four hundred years, eh?"

"Well, you know yourself, Mr. Conne, all the gold from Peru was carted across the Isthmus in those old days. They had ships waiting on the Atlantic coast to take it to Spain. Don't you suppose away off in the jungle there may be some loose—"

"Ingots?" queried Mr. Conne. "That's what the little fellow at home called them, wasn't it? Say, Harry, wouldn't he just wallow in an adventure after hidden treasure?"

"Gordon?" laughed Harry. "Oh, wouldn't he, though?"

"You don't suppose there's really any chance of his getting down this way?"

"Not a bit, Mr. Conne; he *says* he's coming, but he plans trips to the North Pole, to Mars, everywhere."

"He's good as a circus," mused Mr. Conne.

"Only," said Harry, reverting rather hesitatingly to the other subject, "those old days when they brought the gold from Peru across the Isthmus—"

"'Fraid we couldn't use the Peru act, Harry boy."

"How about the pirates?" queried Andy, who was beginning to be quite interested. "*They* came later, didn't they? And *they* hid gold."

"Yes, but not enough later; even that was three hundred years back," Mr. Conne chuckled. "You couldn't give Vasco a couple of hundred years more, could you, Harry? Just as an accommodation now, to help out?" He contemplated Harry with a very shrewd, businesslike air, holding pencil and paper ready as if he were going to figure the thing out if Harry would say the word, and make the two ends meet. The boy was exasperated.

"Oh, well, let's drop the subject," said he; "you can't be serious. Of course, I know there haven't been any pirates or Spanish galleons knocking around in Vasco's lifetime."

"Don't you mind him, Harry," said George

Warren. "He gets on *my* nerves sometimes, too; he'd jolly you if you were dying."

"Now, look here, you boys," said Mr. Conne, in his comfortable, conciliatory way; "you're all so very smart! I'd like to send the whole three of you back to kindergarten! Now, you listen."

He picked up one of the machettes and, keeping time with it, hummed a stanza of a song which ran in Harry's head for many months thereafter:

"In a cavern, in a canon,
Excavating for a mine,
Lived a miner, 'forty-niner,
With his daughter, Clementine.

"Oh, my darling, oh, my darling,
Oh, my darling, Clementine,
You are lost and gone forever,
Drefful sorry, Clementine."

"Well, do you know what that means?" he smiled, laying down the machette.

"I suppose 'Clementine' is a girl, but I'll never be happy till I know what 'forty-niner' means."

"Well, then, it means the year 1849—the year of the California gold fever—when there was enough gold carried across this Isthmus to make old Peru look like a County Poorhouse!"

The three boys were plainly interested, much to Mr. Conne's amusement.

"Why, that was only—let's see, that was only

about sixty years ago, Mr. Conne," said Harry, incredulously.

"You seem to be all right in arithmetic," said Mr. Conne, "even though you are a little rusty in history."

"Well, if that's the case," said Harry, glancing at the books which lay about, "I guess I've come to the right place; you seem to have a way of rooting interesting things out of the past, and they never seem dry when you tell them. I guess the history of this little curleycue neck of land isn't very dry anyway, if it comes to that."

"It's pretty damp, if it comes to that," observed Andy Breen.

"Andy, I'll stand you in a corner if you don't stop that; that's a slap at the rainy season, Harry; don't pay any attention to him. Well, now," Mr. Conne added, sliding down in his chair until he almost sat on his back, and crossing his feet on the table, "suppose we imagine that we're all sitting around the fireside on a winter's night, mosquitoes howling outside, bleak wind cutting up in Culebra Cut, snow blowing in sheets and pillowcases through the wire netting, and I'll give you a little heart-to-heart chat about dear old times."

"Don't forget your darling Clementina," said Harry.

"She'll be on the job," answered Mr. Conne.

It was the funniest history lesson that Harry had

ever heard. Later, as he learned from other sources and more at length the wonderful story of the Isthmus, he reflected that Mr. Conne's account was perfectly true when reduced, as Harry said, to a common denominator.

"I guess the old gentleman fixed you up as far as Columbus was concerned, didn't he, Harry?"

"Mr. Wentworth? Yes, and I'll never forget it."

"Yes, he was a nice old gentleman. Well, a while after Christopher gave it up for a bad job, in the year fifteen sumpty-sump,¹ our old friend, King Ferdinand, sent a couple of fellows to start settlements in these parts. One of them, Nicuesa, was royal butcher, though the whole tribe were pretty good butchers if it comes to that. The other fellow's name was Uneeda or Ojeda,² or some such name, and he was quite a boy from all accounts. He'd been over with Columbus, and he was the champion boy scout of the fifteenth century. One time he stood on his head on the top of a church steeple to amuse Queen Isabella. In short, he was the fellow that put the stun in stunt. Both of these fellows put in at San Domingo so as to swagger around awhile and drum up recruits. Then they started off. Ojeda took a small boat and went ashore with a few of his followers down at the end

¹ He meant 1509.

² Ojeda is correct.

of the Isthmus where it joins South America, and the Indians gave him a great reception.

“When they got through with Ojeda’s party, there were just two of it left. One was Ojeda himself; there was no way to kill him, because he wore a locket which gave him a charmed life, so he said, and it was just a waste of good arrows and valuable poison to try. He was indestructible. Well, he and his one lucky companion went back to the ship, and that night they had a meeting and talked things over. They decided that they’d rather not be killed so fast—in such big batches; so they hoisted sail and made a settlement a little farther along the line. There they began dying from famine and fever, for Uncle Sam hadn’t cleaned up the Isthmus in those days. Of course, no ordinary famine could kill old Uneeda, but seeing his companions dying off all around him, he finally took it into his head to sail back to San Domingo for help and provisions. Personally, I think it was a good idea.

“Well, now we come to Nicuesa, the royal butcher, and he had troubles of his own, too. He landed up here beyond Porto Bello, near the Gulf of San Blas, and the San Blas Indians gave him their undivided attention for a while, and the royal butcher picked up some tricks in butchering that he never knew before.

“Now, Harry, lay down that cartridge-belt and listen, for here’s where your old friend comes waltz-

ing on the stage. A relief expedition was started from San Domingo to Ojeda's settlement, in charge of an old fellow, a lawyer, who took along his books thinking he could put an end to the fever and famine by the strong arm of the law. I don't know what use a law book would be in such a case unless you could eat it, but anyway he was well equipped. However, he wasn't so wise and sagacious as he thought he was. For it was on that very ship that our old chum, Balboa, shipped in a barrel. He owed money enough in San Domingo to build the Panama Canal, with some left over for pin-money, and he thought this was a good way to get rid of his troubles, as I suppose it was. Little the old lawyer knew whom he had aboard! Well, sir, in time out comes Vasco Nuñez de Balboa, like a jack-in-the-box, pushes the old lawyer back into a corner, and announces that he has an idea or two and would like to take charge of the expedition.

“ ‘You're the boy for us,’ said they, and that was the beginning of the career of the great Balboa, whose head is now on the postage stamps. He took charge of things from that time on, and the old lawyer had plenty of time to study his books.

“ Well, Balboa relieved Uneededa's starving colony, brought them up the coast a ways, and started a real genuine settlement which he called Santa Maria. And that was the first real town started on the Isthmus. Pretty soon, along came Nicuesa, the

royal butcher, with his followers, but Balboa wouldn't let him land. He had troubles enough already. So the royal butcher sailed away—and he hasn't been heard from, from that day to this. I don't believe there's much chance of his showing up now.

“ Well, Balboa ran the settlement, and it grew and prospered. He made good, and that's why he's remembered now, while Uneeda and the butcher and the lawyer—and the baker and the candlestick-maker—are forgotten. He started the first real settlement, made it prosper, and he discovered the Pacific Ocean. You see, after all, it doesn't make much difference how bold you are, or how adventurous—it's what you accomplish.

“ Now, Harry, here's where we begin to hear the clink of gold. There was an old Indian chief that used to hobnob with Balboa, and one day he was giving out souvenirs—chunks of gold. He was very much surprised when he saw the Spaniards make such a scramble for it, for he didn't suppose it had any value. But if there's one thing more than another that'll make a Spaniard sit up and take notice, it's gold.

“ The chief told them if that was what they were after all they had to do was to cross the hills till they came to a great sea where, far to the south, lived a people that possessed no end of this yellow metal. I suppose the old fellow meant Peru.

“ Well, anyway, Balboa and his followers were on the gold roll from that day forth. After a while, he assembled a little band of sturdy followers, plunged into the jungle, and literally cut his way across to the Pacific. It’s a fact that in the course of this adventurous enterprise he climbed a tree from which both oceans were visible, and from whose branches he caught his first sight of the Pacific. That’s Balboa’s Tree.

“ And that’s as far as Balboa got in the direction of Peru. Back through the jungle they went, to spring the news on Santa Maria that they had made a slight discovery—the Pacific Ocean. But there had been some doings at Santa Maria during their absence. A new governor had landed and that was the end of Balboa’s rule. So, being out of a job, he turned his attention to further adventures. That’s when he built the ships and carted them over the Isthmus in pieces, thinking to launch them in the Pacific and heave ho, my lads, for Peru!

“ Right there he made the mistake of his life. He went back across the Isthmus to Santa Maria for something or other—forgot his pocketbook, maybe—and there was old What’s-his-name’s¹ chance. Quick as a flash, he threw Balboa into jail on some cooked-up charge, and the founder of the first settlement on the Isthmus and the discoverer of the Pacific Ocean was beheaded—*murdered*.”

¹ Pedrarias, the new governor and an unscrupulous tyrant.

"That was a barbarous, cruel age," said Harry, shaking his head in horror at those dreadful last words.

"Oh, I don't know," drawled Mr. Conne; "old Vesuvius—what-do-you-call-him—Zamora? He'd do the same thing to-day if he had anything to gain by it."

"Oh, no, Mr. Conne—"

"Oh, yes, he would; he'd stab you in the back quick as look at you. Well, now, we're going to get to Peru, at last. Our old pal Uneeda had a friend called Pizarro. These names make you dizzy, Harry? We'll wallow through one or two more of them, and then, thank goodness, we'll come to Stevens and Chauncey and a few like that. Well, now, let's see, where was I? Oh, yes. Old Governor Pedrarias, after he had Balboa murdered, built the city of Panama over here on the Pacific side. No use looking out of the window, Harry; those lights aren't from the old Spanish city. That's dead and gone; Sir Henry Morgan, the pirate, fixed it.

"Now this fellow, Pizarro, sailed down the Pacific to Peru, and there he found quite a civilized government which he turned inside out. The kings were called the Incas. The tales about Peru proved to be correct; gold abounded there, and the gentle Pizarro proceeded to squeeze it dry. Murder, massacre, slavery, treachery, all the cute little Spanish

tricks he used until Peru became a land of desolation.

“ It’s a long story, red and yellow, blood and gold. All this treasure, as you know, was brought up the coast to old Panama City and carted across the Isthmus to be sent to Spain. They built a road through the jungle for that purpose, and it’s there yet. George and Andy filmed it up the other day. They carted gold across just as they cart earth down to Miraflores Dump to-day, or at least it was pretty near as plentiful. Panama City became rich. Spain became rich. Those were great times, Harry. But the merry-go-round always stops. This thing couldn’t go on forever. And here is where your Uncle Henry makes his bow. I suppose Henry, take him first and last, was about the best all-round buccaneer that ever flew the skull-and-crossbones. There was one good thing about him, anyway; he had a plain, ordinary English name—Morgan. Sounds good, doesn’t it, after Nicuesa and Ojeda and Pizarro and that crowd?

“ Well, Sir Henry Morgan saw what was going on and he had a weakness for gold himself. It got on his nerves to hear about those mule-packs of gold crossing the Isthmus and being shipped to Spain, and he got just sick thinking of those warehouses in Panama City filled up with the precious metal. He didn’t like Spaniards anyway. So he made an attack on Porto Bello, not so far from where Colon is now.

By the time he and his merry cutthroats got through with it, both its forts were shattered and the town was a mass of charred ruins. Most of the inhabitants were murdered. The Spaniards got some of their own medicine, and Sir Henry got the gold. You can see the ruins of the old watch-towers to-day, and Andy here scraped his shin on an old cannon overgrown with jungle—just where Sir Henry left it, I dare say.

“Sir Henry and his band stayed in the old ruined city a week or two enjoying themselves, resting up, and putting their gold aboard his ships. Before leaving, he sent a message across the Isthmus to Panama City telling the governor that he had had the time of his life and to expect him over there before so very long for another ‘social.’

“Sir Henry was a noble, upright man, and he never broke his word. So, sure enough, awhile later he landed at the mouth of the Chagres River, cut up through the hills about where the dam is now, and hiked it across. He paid his respects to Panama City the same as he had to Porto Bello—only more so. He separated it from its gold. The buildings he burned, the inhabitants he slaughtered, the gold he carted back through the jungle. Poor old Panama City never recovered from the shock. That was the end of its glory. The Spanish king went into a rage when he heard of Morgan’s little call, for

he thought that *he* was the grand champion slaughterer.

“ Well, well, Harry, you see it’s gold, gold, gold, from beginning to end. From the little yellow nuggets the poor ignorant savages gave Columbus, right up to the little pile of gold pieces your Uncle Sam hands you each month, it’s just a story of gold.

“ Morgan put an end to the Peru business, and to Spanish glory in the new world. They built a new Panama City—you can see the lights down there now, Harry—and walled it in, but somehow Spain’s day was over. Too much Morgan—too much gold. The people became luxurious and idle, and one thing or another combined to end that wonderful period of wealth and adventure. Years and years rolled by; Colombia, in South America, managed to wriggle free of Spain, and Panama was one of her provinces.

“ But Panama’s middle name was gold, and she couldn’t get away from it. Gold, gold, gold!

“ Well, in the year 1849—now hold your hand up to your ear, Harry—here comes Clementina; in 1849 it was discovered that California, which we had acquired in the Mexican War, was chock full of gold. So you see, there you are again—gold, gold, gold!

“ Now in those good old days, there was no railroad west of St. Louis, nor an aeroplane this side of

Dreamland. There were three ways of getting out to that new land of wealth. One was around Cape Horn; one was by caravan over the Rockies; and the other was to come right down here to this very same little old Isthmus by ship, cross it, then on up the Pacific coast by vessel to California. It seems a long way round, but it was the quickest, easiest, and cheapest. To make things easier, a few American gentlemen got together and started the Panama Railroad, and it was some job! You hear it said there was a life sacrificed for every tie laid. They're pretty good ties—*lignum-vitæ*—the only wood that can stand the jungle and the swamp-worms, but I wouldn't give my life for one of them.

“ Well, in the year '49, Harry, there was a perfect stream of gold-seekers crossing the Isthmus; had the Peru act beat all to nothing.

“ The railroad went only part way, and it was a toss-up whether the train landed you anywhere. I say *landed*, because the tracks sank into the swamp about as fast as they laid them. So most of the 'forty-niners canoed up the Chagres to Gamboa, just about where the Cut begins now, then hiked it the rest of the way across. Your uncle hadn't shown up with his mop and his quinine pills then, and lots of them died—malaria, cholera, yellow fever—the jungle is full of their bones now, poor fellows; some of them going, some coming, some on their way back with—yes, sir, with *bags of gold*. Why, Harry,

haven't you been down to the old sea-wall in the city?"

"Yes, I walked along it the other day."

"Well, didn't you notice the initials cut in the stones?"

"Yes, I thought those were old Spanish—"

"No-o! Those were cut there by good Americans—'forty-niners, waiting for the ships to come up the coast and take them aboard. Some of them never saw home again. I often wonder, when I look at those initials, just who they belonged to and how they made out in their gold hunt. I can just see them sitting there on that old wall, burning up with fever, half of them, and cutting their obscure names in the stone just to kill the time while waiting to catch a first glimpse of a sail or a line of smoke to the south. All the Chilian and Peruvian ships stopped at Panama to take them on. Then, yo-ho for Eldorado!"

Harry had been deeply interested as Mr. Conne rattled on.

"I noticed those initials," said he; "there was one pair carved deep and very plain, F. B. I thought likely they stood for Fernando Bazzizo, or some such—"

"Frank Bennett, like as not; but it would be fun to know just who that fellow was, wouldn't it, Harry? Like enough his bones are in the jungle now—his gold too, maybe, if he got any."

Harry was silent for a few moments, and Mr. Conne, apparently through talking, was sharpening a pencil with the tip end of one of the old machettes.

"It's a funny thing, isn't it," Harry finally mused, "to leave home and never be heard from again?"

"Yes, very cute," said Mr. Conne, eying the point of the pencil.

"No, but really," said Harry, "just to go away and never be heard of again. You can't stop thinking about it. There was a fellow home in Oakwood—he was before my time, but his sister lives there yet, and I've often heard the old lady tell how he went to the Mexican War and was never heard of from that day to this."

"Died fighting under Scott?" said Mr. Conne. "Well, he was a good man to die fighting under. You're not going yet?"

"Yes, I've got to," said Harry, rising. "Mr. Conne," he added, as they all gathered about him to say good-by, "will you please be serious a minute, and don't guy me? I know you think I've got the adventure bug, but do you suppose it's possible that that parrot knows something—that he has some secret—that he knows where—"

"Knows where what?" Mr. Conne pressed with mischievous resolve; "go on, finish."

"Where there's treasure hid, then," Harry blurted out, blushing a little to admit his romantic credulity.

Mr. Conne put his hand on the boy's shoulder, im-

mensely pleased at the boyish, adventurous nature which Harry could not conceal.

“Harry, you’re a great boy.”

“Oh, you’re always saying that.”

“Well, then, what shall we do? Start a treasure-seeking syndicate? You be president, I’ll be treasurer, and the parrot will be confidential secretary.”

“Do you think maybe he knows?” Harry persisted, ignoring these joking remarks.

Mr. Conne cocked his head sideways in his businesslike fashion, and for a moment looked serious and thoughtful.

“I think it’s just possible,” said he.

CHAPTER XII

AN INTRUDER

"He would just as soon stab you in the back as look at you."

That was the sentence which rang in Harry's mind as he went home. Mr. Conne had said it of Zamora, and the boy had unbounded confidence in Mr. Conne's wisdom. Had he said it merely as a casual remark, or did he mean it as a warning? Just as a casual remark, Harry decided.

But here was a man, a friend, good, fair, and with amazing shrewdness, and he had said that some one would just as soon stab a person in the back as look at him! Harry had as little fear as a boy could have; he had risked his life more than once, but the idea of a person stabbing another in the back, creeping up slyly and silently—oh, well, he thought, that was only an expression, a way of saying that Zamora would stop at nothing to carry out his purpose. So he ceased, or tried to cease, thinking about the unpleasant sentence with its suggestion of stealth and cowardice, and thought of the pleasant evening he had had, doubly pleasant because unexpected.

"If some one sent me that card for a practical

joke," he chuckled, "they got stung, with an accent on the stung."

Ever since he had listened to the soft, meditative voice of old Mr. Wentworth telling about Columbus, he had wanted to know more about the Isthmus, and now he had the tale, filtered of its dry details by passing through the mind of Mr. Carleton Conne. "Let's see," he thought. "I guess I've got it all now, except the story of how the French tried to dig a canal. I'll get him to tell me that too, sometime," he added. Then he fell to thinking about the 'forty-niners, and wondering who "Clementina" was. "Just a girl in the song, I suppose," he concluded; "probably her brother or her lover went to California for gold, and maybe—yes, maybe those were his initials—the F. B.; no, not if she was only a girl in a song. But it *would* be interesting to know whose initials they really were, and what became of him and whether he got any gold. That," he mused, "was, let's see, sixty-one—two—yes, sixty-two years ago." Then he fell to wondering how old Vasco Nuñez de Balboa really was, and whether his chattering could actually have any—

"Hello, Harry."

"Oh, hello, Jack; when did you get on? Where are we, anyway?"

"Just leaving Corozal, but I've been on since we left Pan. What's the trub? Sleepy?"

"I guess I was half dreaming," Harry confessed,

as he moved closer to the window for Jack Holden to sit down beside him.

"I don't often see you on the last train," said the soldier.

"That's because I'm not often on it," said Harry. "By the time I have mess and get to quarters nights, I'm about ready to flop down in an easy-chair. Where do you get off?"

"Las Cascadas is the nearest to camp. Sometimes I get out and beat it up from Empire. I can get back into camp that way without touching the Cascadas station. You never know who you'll meet there."

"That's when you sneak off, you mean?"

"'Auto-leave,' we call it—leave we give ourselves."

"Oh, I see."

"But to-night I'm going to drop off at Paraiso Junction."

"Somebody hanging around Empire station?"

"Sure. I'm tired, too; this is my temp day; I'd like to sit here up to Cascadas."

"Temp day?"

"Malaria. Didn't it strike you yet? Some days I run up to a hundred and two, but not often."

"Oh, fever?"

"Well, I guess; but it gets into your joints and makes you tired."

"The doctor told me," said Harry, "that if I ate light and didn't smoke and rested nights instead of knocking around over in Pan, like some of the fellows, I probably wouldn't get sick, and I haven't been sick yet."

"That's a good shot," Jack laughed amiably.

"Oh, I didn't mean that for you."

"I guess you find Barney a pretty hard boss, don't you?"

"He isn't my boss," said Harry.

"Did you quit?" asked Jack, in surprise.

"No, indeed, but Mr. Barney and I work for the same boss. So do you, if it comes to that."

"Oh, you mean the gov—"

"Uncle Sam," interrupted Harry.

"Huh!" Jack sneered.

"Jack," said Harry, after a pause, "I don't see why you ever went into the army if you dislike it so much. You must have known you'd have to stick it out."

"Oh, I just took it for a flier. I was out of a job and a fellow came down the river up home getting recruits."

"You live in Missouri, don't you, Jack?"

"Born there, in Whitville, right on the Mississippi. My mother and sister wanted me to go down and enlist; they said it was better than loafing, and everything was dead in town. So I did it to please them, and now, you see, my hands are tied behind

my back. I could get a good job right here on the ditch if I had the chance."

"I doubt it, Jack; they're not increasing the force any more, but lessening it. You see, the end is in sight. You couldn't get on the gold roll anyway without Civil Service. If I were you, I'd just buckle down and make the best of it."

"It's a long time, two years."

"Oh, no, it isn't; it'll soon be up. Do you know, Jack," he continued earnestly, in the chummy way that he often fell into with Jack, "ever since I started away from home it seems to me that every one has been saying to me in one way or another, 'Don't give up—don't be a quitter.' They haven't just said it, you know, but—oh well, now for instance, I know a girl and she said to me when I was starting away, 'Don't be a what-do-you-call-it, will you?' She had an idea I might get sick or tired or homesick or discouraged and go home. She knew there was some word that fellows use for one that gives up; and I think her way of saying it—calling it a 'what-do-you-call-it'—I think that's helped to keep me going when I *have* been a little tired. I do get dead tired sometimes, Jack. And when we write to each other we have our little joke about being a 'what-do-you-call-it,' and she asks me to tell her what the word really is and I won't do it because I like her to use 'what-do-you-call-it.' How old is your sister, Jack?"

"Seventeen."

"Do you know," said Harry, after a pause, "I think a girl hates a quitter worse than a man does. They tell you not to run any risks, and then if you take their advice and balk at danger, they despise you. It's funny."

Jack said nothing.

"Then there was an old gentleman on the steamer who told me about Columbus and a fellow named Mendez, and—oh, well, the whole thing of it was, *Don't give up*. I like it down here; I've made lots of friends, and you're one of the best of them too. And I'm fond of my work. But even if I wasn't, I wouldn't give up. As sure as I sit here, there isn't any power on earth that would make me give up, no sir, there isn't! I'm going to stay here till the Canal opens, till I've worked two full years. I'm going to win the medal!"

Jack laughed good-naturedly at Harry's enthusiasm. "You've sure got that medal on the brain, haven't you?" said he.

Harry laughed, too. "Yes," he said, "it's my middle name. It's a funny thing, Jack, I always dream of it when I'm tired. Sometimes I'll come home played out and feel that I can't work another day and then I'll go to sleep and dream about that medal. Have you seen the one they've got on exhibition up at the Administration Building? There are two, so you can see both sides. They're in a

glass case. One side shows Culebra Cut. I'm glad of that, because I work in the Cut, and mine will be a reminder— I wish," he broke off, "that I had that picture of Uncle Sam—"

"Oh," laughed Jack, "I've seen pictures enough of him."

"I know, but this one was different; he looked like the grandest old boss you ever saw! And honestly, whenever I think about getting the medal, I always think of *him* handing it to me. What's the matter?" he queried, smiling suddenly.

"Oh, nothing; only you're a funny fellow."

"How?"

"Oh, I don't know. I wouldn't mind being like you. You've certainly got the medal bug all right, and I hope you win it, Harry; honest, I do. I guess it would about kill you if you didn't," he added.

"Oh," laughed Harry, "the thought of that medal is what's kept me well; doctor says it's the quinine, but I told him, no, it was the medal."

Jack laughed amiably. He did like Harry immensely, and he was always generous enough to be interested in his friend's ambition.

"Will you come to scout meeting Tuesday night?" Harry asked.

"Barney going to be there?"

"Maybe—I don't know; but that needn't stop you."

"He doesn't like me."

"Yes, he does; we all do—all the kids; and I do, especially."

Yes, that was true; everybody liked him. Mr. Barney did not always believe him, and I'm afraid he had not much respect for him; but he liked him.

"Jack, Mr. Barney says—"

"Junction!" called the trainman.

Jack rose. He had listened, somewhat impressed with Harry's talk, for he was a good-hearted fellow and genuinely fond of Harry. But he seemed a little bewildered at his friend's earnestness. I dare say he set Harry down for a dreamer with a pleasant little touch of impracticable romance about him. If so, he was half right.

"Well," said he, pushing Harry's cap off his head as a parting pleasantry, "you're right, old man; you've got the right idea of it, and if I should go on auto-leave you can just bet I wouldn't go home, because she's like your 'what-do-you-call-it' friend—my sister is. So long."

He swung off the train and struck into the Empire road, his erect form and straight shoulders showing in the glare of the one small electric bulb which hung at the deserted station. His head was thrown back in that splendid, nonchalant fashion which Uncle Sam has a way of teaching to his soldiers, and he seemed to Harry more handsome and manly than ever before.

A few moments more and the train stopped at Culebra, where Harry alighted. As he passed the Administration Building on his way through the village, he noticed a single lighted window in the lower corner. Even as he watched it, somewhat surprised that any of the business offices should be in use so late, the light went out and then a man in white emerged from the main entrance and started across the little patch of lawn.

He wore no hat and carried an armful of papers. Harry stood still under a palm tree, watching; but the man's head was bowed as if in thought, and he did not see the boy. A few yards distant was a large bungalow with a pretty arched trellis around the door. Within it hung a light, and as the man approached this Harry could see that his hair was very gray; it shone like silver in the glare of the electric bulb. For just a moment he caught a glimpse of the face. He had seen it once before but had not known then whose it was. There was something very calm about the face, as if its owner possessed a mind so trained and clear that it could decide things without much thinking about them. Irresistibly, just in that one moment, the conviction was borne home to the boy that there was just the kind of man whose advice he would like to ask if he were ever uncertain or in trouble. Then the figure disappeared within the bungalow.

"It's the Old Man," said Harry to himself; "I

wonder what he was doing over there all alone so late."

As he reached quarters, the familiar voice of Tom Bonney floated down in greeting through the darkness and, looking up, he saw two dim forms tilted back in two chairs on the screen-enclosed balcony.

"That you, Harry?"

"Yes," Harry answered. "Get away from my window, you old loafer. Who's that with you, Russell? What are you doing up on my floor, anyway?"

"If *I* can stand it, you ought to be able to," retorted Tom. "Jiminies, these steam-shovel hands think they own the Isthmus!"

"Hey, Russell," called up Harry, "haven't I told you not to bring any of that first-floor trash up on our veranda?"

"Hush," said Russell, "you'll wake the baby."

"Say, Harry," called Tom, "there's a bat in your room, or else that bird of yours is loose and flopping round. I tried to get in, but your window-blinds were locked."

"I didn't lock them," said Harry. "Wait a minute and I'll be with you. How is it, cool up there?"

"Oh, so so, but I'm going to turn in now—too much drilling going on."¹

¹ In the familiar Isthmian parlance, the work of a mosquito as he buries his sting in the flesh was aptly called "drilling," and the insect himself was commonly called a "drill."

"You fellows must have stuck your feet through the screen," said Harry.

The two rose as Harry disappeared within the entrance. They stepped through the window of Russell's room, Tom Bonney passing into the hall and down the stairs, meeting Harry as he came up.

"How was the racket?" said he.

"There wasn't any."

"Get out!"

"Sure as I'm standing here."

"Somebody kidding you, eh?"

"Looks that way."

"Huh, pretty mean kind of a trick."

"Oh, well," said Harry, "no harm done. What's this you're giving me about my room?"

"There's a bat or a ghost or some old thing in there. Russell and I went out about nine to get some Canal Zone's own ozone—"

"Some which?"

"Ozone—fresh air."

"Oh."

"And we heard something flopping round in there. You haven't added a monkey to your menagerie, have you?"

"I guess it's just the window-shade," said Harry.

"Like as not, but I tried to get in and investigate. Say, Harry, did you hear that one about—here, wait a minute—it's a new one, just fresh out of the oven! If a man with a machette can chop away a mile of

jungle a day, how much could Culebra Cut? Here, wait a minute, that isn't all!"

But Harry was retreating frantically up the stairs with his hands at his ears.

It was evident that Tom had not been greatly alarmed at the sounds in Harry's room, nor was Harry at hearing of them. But something, perhaps it was that sentence of Mr. Conne's, perhaps the general effect of all he had heard that evening—something, in any event, prompted him to pause outside his room before he unlocked the door, and feel in his pockets for a match, but he had none. Then, laughing at his own groundless apprehensions, he unlocked the door and striding in, stumbled against the center-table, reached above it and turned on the electric light.

Vasco Nuñez was swaying from side to side on his perch, the pupils of his eyes contracted to very pinheads, and glaring through the wires straight at the bed, whose white counterpane, conspicuous in the sudden light, was stirring where its fringe almost touched the floor. Harry went up to the bird and spoke to it, but Vasco ignored him utterly, swaying back and forth in his crouching attitude, which would have been impressive in a tiger, but which in a parrot was quite ludicrous. Glancing at the window to see if a draught of air might be swaying the counterpane, he saw that the little button had been turned, locking the blinds.

He was now truly perplexed and apprehensive. Something was wrong here; but he kept his head. Going to the dresser, he took out his little pearl-handled revolver, whistling meanwhile, as if careless and unsuspecting. Then, standing well away from the bed and out of range of anything beneath it, he cautiously lifted an edge of the counterpane and peered beneath it. Far over in the corner two eyes glared through the darkness like the eyes of an enraged animal at bay. But it was no animal, for beside the eyes there was something else which gleamed—a something which beasts do not use.

It was the glitter of steel.

CHAPTER XIII

LITTLE PEDRO

RETREATING a pace or two, with his revolver pointing beneath the bed, Harry ordered the crouching object to come forth. To his surprise, there obediently emerged a bundle of rags which, as it gathered shape, proved to be a very small boy not more than eight or nine years old. He held a vicious-looking stiletto in his hand and seemed in a very panic of terror, looking first toward the door, then toward the window in frantic search for a means of escape.

"Lay that on the table," said Harry, quietly; "now put both your hands on your head—you needn't be afraid, I'm not going to hurt you." He felt carefully where the pockets would have been if the tattered rags could have boasted such luxuries, but found no other weapon.

"What did you come here for?" said Harry; "to steal?"

"I no steal," the little fellow panted. His terror was quite as pitiable as his clothing. "I honest Spiggoty."

"Well, then," pursued Harry, gently, "what *did* you come for? Don't look at the door, look at me."

Harry was not slow to see the trap in which the little fellow had been caught. The mosquitoes which had driven his friends in from the veranda had, no doubt, swarmed in through a hole in the screen, which had been made by this small intruder. Then, after his entrance into the room, Tom Bonney and Russell had taken their places outside the window, unconsciously shutting off the boy's avenue of escape, and when he heard Harry's step on the stairs he had made for the only concealment the room afforded.

All this Harry realized. But why had this ragged urchin singled him out as a victim of his thefts; for what else, indeed, could have brought him there? Harry knew how precocious these diminutive "Spiggoties" were; he had seen them swaggering about the wharves beguiling tourists with their reckless pranks, but this little fellow displayed none of the unpleasant bravado which most of them showed in the face of death or danger, and despite his unseemly rags and his evidently criminal purpose, Harry could not altogether conquer a feeling of sympathy for him, he was so small and in such a pitiable state of terror. Harry had a fondness for small boys and his winning quality with them was unfailing.

"Aren't you rather small to be a—to break into

a person's room? You're likely to get killed some day, doing a thing like that. Or you'll be sent to jail, and that wouldn't be much fun."

"I honest—"

"Sit down there," said Harry. "Oh, no, you're not honest or you wouldn't break into my room—and with a knife like that," he added, taking up the stiletto and chuckling in spite of himself. "Why, it's almost as big as you are." Then he shuddered as he felt its vicious edge and examined it more carefully. "Huh," said he, "who's F. B.—your father? Whom does this belong to?"

The boy stared in open-eyed wonder at Harry. He had evidently expected that his captor would kill him, or at the very least march him uncere- moniously to the lock-up. But Harry appeared more interested in the knife than in its late pos- sessor.

"What's your name?"

"Hernando."

"Hernando what?"

"No more—jes' Hernando."

"Huh. Of course, if you won't tell me the truth we might as well stop talking. You understand English?"

"Nah—I no have Engleesh—only Spanish."

"Come here, Hernando. You understand that, don't you? Well, now, you listen carefully—and don't try to make me think you don't understand.

You tried to do something dishonest and you failed. Now you give the other way a try—understand? You understand that, don't you? Yes, of course, you do—you know heaps, plenty, English. Who sent you here? Tell me who that knife belongs to. Careful now, and we're going to be good friends."

"I can no tell you; he kill—"

"Oh, no, he won't kill you, either. Come now, what's your right name?"

Whether the little boy's predicament had so deprived him of his presence of mind that he knew not what he was saying, or whether Harry's friendly manner and the utter hopelessness of fooling him had produced their effect, the small boy blurted out a name which caused Harry to stare in amazement.

"*Pedro Requelme.*"

"That your name? Or your father's?"

"Nah—no father—dead—long time; grandfather."

"I see," answered Harry, hardly able to contain his astonishment, "and—"

"Yas, I same name; father, grandfather, little Pedro—all same name."

It was not till this minute that Harry associated the entry into his room with anything but the idea of theft. But now he looked with new interest at the wretched, panting boy before him. Doubtless, the poor little panic-stricken brain saw, with quick instinct, a safer refuge with this quiet, unangered

American boy than with those who had sent him when their rage should be aroused by his failure to accomplish their errand. At any rate, Harry's efforts to get the truth were rewarded more quickly than he had expected, and with the boy's mention of Requelme's name the events of the evening took on a mysterious significance. He knew now who was responsible for that bogus invitation which had led him on a wild-goose chase to Panama. And there—it might be a mere coincidence, to be sure—but there, lying on the table was a stiletto on the wooden handle of which were carved the initials F. B.,—the same he had noticed in the old sea-wall at Panama!

Harry rose and went to the window, humming to himself the catchy tune which Mr. Conne had hummed, as he unbuttoned and threw open the blinds.

“Oh, my darling, oh, my darling,
Oh, my darling, Clementine.”

“Pedro,” said he, still busy with the screen, “you didn't shin up that leader-pipe, did you?”

“Yas—sir.”

“What do you do for a living, Pedro?” Harry asked absently, but it was a sensible enough question, for the lower-class boys of Panama have their choice of earning their own livings or starving.

“I dive for pennies—in Colon.”

"So?" said Harry, seating himself and talking carelessly to put the boy at his ease. "Well, now, you let me tell you something. I don't like either one of your businesses—they no good," he added, pleasantly imitating the boy's own way of talking. "Why, the very first day I came to Panama a little fellow who was diving for pennies got caught under water in the pipe of one of those big suction-dredges, and if I hadn't supposed he was caught by a shark and gone down after him—why, there'd have been one less small boy to dive for pennies in Colon Harbor. Then, this other business—why, that's a *horrible* business for a little boy to be in—breaking into people's rooms!"

He paused as he saw the little fellow staring at him with wonder in his eyes.

"*You* save me?" he gasped.

"What?" said Harry.

"Yas—you save me—I know! See," he added, "see, I show you." And with a miracle of dexterity by which the usual process of taking off a garment was entirely ignored, he bared his back, displaying a black and blue line across it. "See!"

"Yes, I see," said Harry, lifting the tattered garment over the little shoulder again. "Does it hurt you now?"

"Nah—no more—only when swim—try to swim—hurt, ouch! I glad I see you, now. You know plenty how swim!"

"Come here, Pedro." The little boy obeyed and stood between Harry's knees. If there had been no other reason for handling this wretched, neglected urchin carefully, I dare say Harry's natural goodness of heart would have inclined him to pity rather than to blame the child. But there were other reasons for not spoiling an opportunity to learn something by antagonizing and frightening him. Fate had brought to him the very boy whose life he had saved; he had come for a purpose, that was sure, and he was the grandchild of the proprietor of the Balboa Bazaar.

Doubtless the cruel, sinister old man felt perfectly assured of his power over the little boy who lived in mortal dread of him, and little did he dream that the gentleness and winning personality of an American boy would shatter all his blustering authority and confound all his plans. Very likely the big, flabby hand under which Vasco Nuñez had shrunk in fear had been felt with equal cruelty by the little boy who had been sent on this dangerous mission; but the old man's evil influence and power faded away when Harry said, "Come here, Pedro," and the little fellow went and stood between his knees. In all his short and checkered life, he had never received such an invitation before. And to receive it from the very person whose room he had broken into! Pedro did not understand this.

"So you're the little boy I saved. Well, I'm glad you came to see me, Pedro—though you didn't know whom you were coming to see, did you? Do you know what I once heard, Pedro? That if two people meet twice in some strange way, it's a sign they'll be good friends. And that's the way it is with us. First, we met at the bottom of the harbor, and here we meet again. And to show you what a wonderful magician I am, I can tell you what you came here for. Now, see if I'm not right. You came for Mr. Zamora and your grandfather to get my parrot—isn't that so?"

The boy stared in speechless amazement, trying to fathom how Harry could know Zamora. Then he spoke.

"You save my life," said he, "yas—plenty brave—I like you. I *not* kill you."

"No," laughed Harry, "I dare say it would be just as well not to."

But his easy manner presently gave way to alarm as little Pedro crossed to the dresser and taking the quinine bottle, emptied its contents into the basin. "I no kill you," he repeated, shaking his little head resolutely.

Harry followed his movements, shocked, horrified. "Come here, Pedro," he said, the dismay lingering in his voice. "Why—why did you do that? Was there anything—"

"I no kill you," the little fellow repeated dog-

gedly. "You plenty brave—plenty good—I no kill you."

The ragged little form was trembling visibly as Harry drew it toward him, but the child kept repeating the words to himself as if to strengthen his determination. Perhaps it was the first good determination he had ever made. Perhaps the new light which had flared in his poor little, misguided, ignorant brain dazzled him; but he shook his head as if refusing an order just given him. "I no kill you—I no do that." And he was too much agitated to talk.

"You put poison in that, Pedro?" asked Harry, gently, but he got no direct answer; only "I no kill you," as if there were no use saying more.

"All right, Pedro," said Harry; "you're going to stay here with me to-night and to-morrow we'll have a talk."

"Nah—he wait for me."

"Who, Zamora? Well, let him wait," said Harry.

Little Pedro's silence was his assent. By some strange oversight of Requelme, a spark of good had been left unextinguished in the little fellow. It needed only this meeting with the American boy and the realization that he was face to face with his rescuer, to give it life. The brutal Requelme and the wily Zamora had reckoned without these things, and little Pedro, despite their well-considered plans,

had gone over to the enemy. And as this strange, ill-assorted pair sat late that night, there recurred to Harry's mind the good scout maxim which his own scoutmaster, away home in Oakwood, was so fond of expounding; how a good turn lives forever and bears fruit; how it is sure to yield a harvest some time or other after the deed itself has been forgotten. Not a thought had Harry given to his deed in Colon Harbor. Yet here it was, come to his rescue in a time of peril. And its good effects were only just begun.

CHAPTER XIV

BALBOA AND MR. CARLETON CONNE

YES, as sure as you live, little Pedro was a deserter! And what have you to say to that, Mr. Barney? You, who said there was only one kind of desertion? You see, Mrs. Barney was right, after all. Well, well, a few kind words and little Pedro deserted the cause. A few kind words are not a bad sort of investment.

Who would say that little Pedro was wrong in deserting? That would be something of a joke on Mr. Barney, Harry thought. Then he recollected that he had never mentioned Zamora or Requelme or even Vasco Nuñez to Mr. Barney, and not for worlds would he have mentioned to him the subject of hidden treasure; Mr. Barney was too practical and too busy to sympathize with such nonsense. But the talk which he had with little Pedro after we left the two of them together caused Harry a sleepless night, and when morning came he felt that he must seek advice, for he had learned something of a grave nature. And what to do with little Pedro, that was another question. Send him home to be beaten for his failure, and to have wormed out of him what he had told Harry?

"Pedro," he said, "you mustn't go home, but you can't stay here alone, and I must go to work. Here are some pennies and things. Go over to Panama and see the moving pictures. Don't go near Colon. Stay by yourself all day and to-night come back here. If you can take care of yourself to-day, I'll see that no harm comes to you. Don't go near Colon—remember. If you saw Zamora or your grandfather, you'd have to lie to them, and we're going to get through this business without telling any more lies."

There was not much danger of Pedro's being discovered. He had lurked in the byways and looked after himself too long for that. When he was gone, Harry determined that he would tell Mr. Barney what he had learned. Then he changed his mind and resolved to go straight to Colonel Goethals. Then he changed his mind again—the American minister would be the one to see. Then it occurred to him that the President of the Panama Republic would be the proper person. Then he decided that he would go straight down to "82"—and then—then he sat down and did what he might have known from the first he would do.

DEAR MR. CONNE:

You have got to come to my rescue; don't laugh, this is a serious matter. I know you will say the plot grows thinner, but you are right about Zamora.

Last night he and Requelme sent a little boy, Requelme's grandson, to my room. *They* had sent that invitation—to get me away. He was to put poison in my Q. bottle—and he did. I caught him here in my room and he turned out to be—but never mind that, I'll tell you later.

What do you suppose they were afraid of? *Of my understanding the Spanish the parrot talked.* You know, Zamora lately came back from the States and up there he was getting people interested in a filibustering expedition to Panama. He and Requelme had been planning it for a couple of years—an insurrection—here on the Isthmus.

Little Pedro has translated some of the things I told him the parrot had been saying, and it's no wonder they wanted him back and are willing to kill me now.

When Zamora landed he was *wild* because Requelme had sold the parrot; called him a fool. Then they came here—you remember. Pedro caved in and told me about the insurrection and all. I found out something about Vasco's early history too. It seems when Requelme was young he was a sailor and he and a comrade went to hunt for gold. Requelme came back and settled in Colon and brought this parrot with him. He had chunks of gold—you can laugh, but he did. His comrade never came back. Oh, and there's another thing,

too, but it may be only a coincidence. The little boy had an old dagger with the initials F. B. cut in the handle—same initials I saw on the old sea-wall at Pan. Anyway, Requelme was an eighty-two—I mean a 'forty-niner. I'm all mixed up this morning. I've got to hurry down to eighty-two now. If you *possibly can*, come and see me to-night. I don't like to be carting little Pedro over to Pan. I want to keep him under cover.

In great haste,

HARRY.

Having despatched this rather disjointed epistle, Harry hurried down to the Cut. "82," in her lumbering progress, had now reached a point near Culebra, and his path lay through a little cluster of houses somewhat apart from the village. As he went zigzagging down the embankment, the head of Mike appeared from behind the shovel.

"We're burrit aloive!" he shouted.

Then Harry saw that one of "82's" trucks was off the track. Against the near side of the shovel, rock and soil lay in a great, confused mass and this the men had set themselves to clear away. A few yards behind "82," along the path she had traveled, was a miniature mountain of rock and soil and débris, through which twisted tracks appeared here and there, like tangled wires on an ash-heap. The corner of a dirt-car, which must have been standing on

end, projected out of the mass, and near this, to Harry's horror, a pair of boots protruded.

"That's only Arnold," called George, the crane-man; "we'll dig him out when there's time. He isn't much use, anyway."

Mr. Barney, coming around the corner of "82," glanced at the ominous spectacle, chuckled and went on with his work. Harry pulled his boots out of the heap.

"It's good 82 wasn't here, isn't it?" he said.

"Yes, we're in great luck," said Barney, ironically, as he helped the men to lift a rail. "We've got our work to-day cut out for us. Suppose you haul those ties forward."

He indicated the ties as he mopped his forehead and was hard at work again.

"82" had, indeed, reached the perilous region of slides. There were slides all along the Cut, to be sure, but here where the ditch ran between the highest hills was where these glacier-like movements of the surface earth were most continuous and menacing. Other shovels besides "82" were here to clear away this mass which had slid down the embankment, and the larger number of men congregated in this one spot made the hard day's work pleasanter.

Harry went home at night dog-tired. He almost fell asleep at mess. When he reached quarters, he found an envelope from the office. Here were the

further orders at last, he thought. But it proved to be simply a slip announcing that his hard-earned leave of absence was scheduled for the last six weeks of the year. On the back of the slip were printed a few words recommending those on leave to visit the States or, in any event, to leave the Isthmus in order to get the physical benefit of change of scene and climate.

Little Pedro soon appeared, grimy but faithful, and a little later, just as Harry was giving up hope, he saw the dazzling glare of two acetylene lights in front of the doorway, and the dim outline of a touring-car behind them. Presently, George and Andy Breen entered, followed by Mr. Conne, his manner provokingly easy and amused, his hands deep in his trousers pockets.

"H'lo, Harry boy; so you've a job-lot of insurrections and things you want me to look over? And this is Pedro, hey? Hel-lo, Vasco," he added, poking his finger in the cage, "how's the world using you? Regular meeting of the clans, hey, Harry?"

"I'd almost given you up," said Harry.

"Well, we're lucky to get here at all; came along a road that ran right into Culebra Cut; five yards more and we'd have done a loop-the-loop into the Cut—wasn't even a lantern hanging. Well, Harry, what's up?"

Harry opened the cage-door and let Vasco out. The bird stood in the doorway, peering curiously at

the visitors, then clambered up on top of the cage and greeted them with a long, well-modulated "Br-r-r-r-r," shook his feathers and settled himself comfortably as if ready for the conference.

Harry walked over to the cage and gently stroking Vasco's head, said encouragingly, "*Seis, seis—*"

"*Seis cientos fusiles,*" said Vasco Nuñez.

"That's a good Cap," said Harry, persuasively, "*primera—*"

"*Primeramente la Espada, después Votos,*" the parrot shrieked at the top of his voice.

"Did you hear that?" Harry asked, turning to his guests. "'First the sword, then the ballot,' that means."

"What was the other?" asked Mr. Conne.

"'Six hundred guns,'" Harry answered. "That's what Zamora went to the States for, hey, Cap? *Vaya vd.—You* say it, Pedro."

"*Vaya vd. sacarlos de los Estados,*" said Pedro.

And Vasco repeated it. He did more, for he shrieked, "*El momento oportuno ha llegado de golpear.*"

"That's it," said Harry, stroking him gently. "'Now's the time to strike'—wasn't it, Pedro?"

"Yas—yas," said Pedro. "They strike plenty soon now—soon as gun come. Zamora, he go back to—"

"*Callese la boca!*" the parrot yelled at Pedro.

"He no like me," laughed Pedro, "he tell me shut up!"

"That's very impolite, Vasco," said Mr. Conne. "Pedro, how long have they been planning this little game?"

"Year—near two year."

"Humph."

It was from Pedro that Mr. Conne and the boys heard, more in detail, the astounding plan which Requelme and Zamora had for three years been developing in hopes of getting the Panamanian government into their own hands. Zamora, it appeared, was no ordinary man, but a very extraordinary and ambitious villain. Requelme was his tool. And in Panama City, so little Pedro said, was a group of active revolutionists who were ready to rally to the banner of Zamora when he gave the word. He had been in the United States, it seemed, arranging for the surreptitious shipment of arms and ammunition, and these were being forwarded by his American friends. But with all his shrewdness he had talked freely with Requelme and others in the presence of the insignificant listener whose chatterings had at last betrayed him.

Mr. Conne was highly amused at all this, for he said treachery and revolution were the natural occupations of Spaniards, but he listened attentively and seemed to be rather more interested in little Pedro himself than in his plotting elders.

"Well, this was a great discovery," he finally said; "this little fellow, I mean; he's as good as six or eight insurrections."

But little Pedro was not to carry off the laurels of that evening—very far from it. Harry always claimed that it was downright jealousy of Pedro which caused Vasco Nuñez, in a fit of desperation, to play his trump card. He saw little Pedro unfolding an interesting tale to the group; he knew that it was the translation of *his* talk which had opened the way to friends and glory for Pedro, and he sat on top of his cage with an air of superior dignity, grinding his bill and talking to himself in an injured undertone. Once or twice, he sought to attract attention by a sentence from his revolutionary Spanish program, but Pedro had the floor. Once he tried to divert Harry with a highly superior, patent trill, used only on special occasions; once he called, "Kid, oh you Kid!" and once he leaned far over and called him "Harry." Finally, he could stand it no longer and settling himself comfortably and beginning to preen his feathers as if it did not make the slightest difference to him whether they listened or not, he observed, in a low, offhand tone,

"Under Balboa's tree—poor Fred—poor Fred—lots of gold—bags of gold—under Balboa's tree—gold, gold, gold, gold, gold! Bury it—he'll never get it. Poor Fred— B-r-r-r-r-r."

And he fell busily to scraping one of his claws

with his bill as if he were not open for any further discussion.

Mr. Conne had listened attentively. So had Andy Breen and George Warren. Harry's delight was undisguised.

Vasco Nuñez had made a sensation.

And he was not going to spoil the sensation by talking about it. In vain Harry coaxed him with banana, with chocolate, and cocoanut, to say more. He ate the banana, the chocolate, and the cocoanut, but not one syllable would he add to what he had said. Harry turned on the faucet, for the sound of running water often made the bird quite talkative; but it failed this time.

So they fell to asking little Pedro about Vasco's mysterious past. But what little he knew, he had already told Harry, so there was nothing on which to base speculation except such remarks as Vasco Nuñez might condescend to make and the initials, F. B., carved on the handle of the old dagger. Not unlikely those were the initials of the mysterious "Fred" whom Vasco mentioned.

Whatever Mr. Conne actually thought of the chances of discovering either treasure or a secret, he was quite willing to let their trip into the Balboa country include a visit to the ancient tree from which the original Vasco Nuñez de Balboa first gazed upon the distant Pacific.

But it was a strange fact, which Harry often

thought of afterward, that before he visited the scene of Balboa's great discovery, he was destined first to visit, under stranger circumstances and on a graver business, the distant island of Hispaniola ¹ from which that hardy warrior embarked.

¹Now called Haiti.

CHAPTER XV

FOR THE SAKE OF THE BOSS

WHEN the visitors left, they took little Pedro with them. "If anybody inquires for him," said Mr. Conne, as he cranked the motor, "just say he's over at the Tivoli."

That was all he said, and Harry felt that the little fellow was in good hands. What Mr. Conne would do about the insurrectionary plot, he had not the slightest idea, but he was only too willing to leave it to him, for he believed Mr. Conne was the only man he knew capable of dealing with Zamora.

What Harry thought of now was his coming vacation with these delightful friends. The mystery of Balboa's Tree, which they were to investigate, gave the trip fresh interest. He had worked on the Canal for a year with hardly a thought of his vacation, although every arrival of the government steamers brought back some employees from their visits home. Tom Bonney had been to the States and returned with glowing accounts of his visit there.

But through all that hard first year Harry's mind had been fixed upon the medal. He thought of that so much and talked of it so much that his friends

made fun of him and told him the awarding of the medals had been discontinued, and so on. Often he would wander through the big Administration Building and gaze at the two medals there displayed under glass on their plush cushion, and read again (though he knew it by heart) the conditions on which one was to be had. One side of the medal showed a profile of Theodore Roosevelt,¹ and the other a view of the great Cut with a mammoth vessel sailing majestically through it, and the sun rising beyond one of its mountainous embankments. Amid its spreading rays were the words, *The land divided, the world united*, while around one edge was lettered, *Presented by the President of the United States*, and around the edge of the opposite side, *For two years' continuous service on the Panama Canal*.

Harry often saw the medal in his mind's eye, and now as he stood alone on the doorstep of his quarters after the auto had departed, he thought how *he* had helped, in a small way, to divide the land and unite the world!

It had been a hard year; a year of unceasing, grinding toil, of weary nights; and now at the end of it he was to have a few play-days and was to spend them in the old historic Balboa country in quest of adventure. He had not forgotten his love of adventure, his summer camping, his canoeing and

¹President when the medals were proposed, and at whose instigation the plan was adopted.

tramps through the woodland in his far-away home; and the more he thought of the coming trip the more he looked forward to it and longed to go. It would be his only chance to press far into the jungle and hew his way out with a machette. And what companions! He should enjoy every minute with the jolly trio, he knew, and come back refreshed and invigorated and ready for his last year under his grand old boss.

Harry was a peculiar boy. He had a way of going off by himself at times; a little of a dreamer, I dare say, and occasionally, in this strange, tropic clime, he would fall to thinking about Oakwood, and wonder what the scouts at home were doing; about the Danforths and Marjorie; and then, sometimes, he would fall to wishing that some good genie would transport his young friend, Gordon Lord, to the Isthmus. How Gordon would enthuse over an actual quest, far into the tropical jungle, after buried treasure. That was right in his line. Whenever Harry fell into these reveries it somehow put him in the spirit to write to his mother, who with his father and sister was now in Italy.

So now he turned to go upstairs, intending before he went to bed to write her what she called a "nice, long letter," and tell her that one year of his work on the Canal being near its end, he stood at the half-way point where Uncle Sam shooed his helpers out for a little foreign recreation, and about the trip

which he was to take into the Balboa country with Mr. Conne.

He had scarcely ascended the first stair when he heard voices, and turning he saw several people rush past with lanterns. Returning to the doorway, he saw other groups hurrying along, some with lanterns, some half dressed, all excited and talking confusedly.

“What’s the matter?” Harry asked.

“Slide!” some runner panted out, as he hurried by.

Harry followed to the point where he had lately descended into the Cut. Here was a straggling crowd, twenty or thirty yards back from a ragged, precipitous embankment, and men were about urging the people to retreat still farther. This was the very spot where Harry usually descended. But where was the house which had always stood there? Then it came jumping into his head what Mr. Conne had said about the road that ended nowhere, and how they had all but shot off into space. He stood amazed at what he saw, and it took him a minute to get his bearings. The face of the familiar scene had changed. Houses which had stood several hundred feet away from the Cut were now almost on the brink of it. The little outlying road the workers used and which they called Precipice Lane, was no longer there. He could not accustom himself to the scene, and for a moment it seemed as if Uncle Sam

must have conjured up a village all in an hour on the dizzy brink of this great cañon.

He edged his way to a young fellow he knew.

"How long has it been going on?" he asked.

"Oh, she's been sliding all evening; there was a big cave-in about nine, I understand, about ten feet in from the bank. She didn't crack away here till half an hour ago."

Going as close to the edge as he dared, Harry peered down into the darkness. In the dim light the earth seemed to be moving downward like a great sluggish waterfall, beneath and away from the clearly defined ragged edge on which he was standing.

"Come back from there!" some one called.
"Are you crazy?"

He was just about to follow this frantic but sensible advice when he fancied he heard voices far away, down in the abysmal depth of the Cut. He thought some one called and some one else answered. The sounds were strangely like voices heard across a stretch of water. Then, far down in the darkness, he saw a tiny light appear, move a little way, and then disappear.

Others, noting his hardihood or his rashness, ventured cautiously nearer to the brink, but none so near as he. He had not gone so far with any clear intention more than to see, if he could, how it looked below. But now the voices, detached and far away

as if they were of another world, and the tiny light moving mysteriously, held him in a spell. Between the precarious height where he stood and those distant ghostly tokens of human life, rolled this earthen ocean, down, down, till he could see it no more.

A sudden terror seized him, then apparently some frantic thought of an expedient, for he rushed along the treacherous brink until a man among the crowd called him a fool and asked him in a thunderous voice if he wanted to kill himself. The speaker, in very desperation, started forward to haul him back, and venturing cautiously, had almost reached him, when there interposed between the two the awful hand of Nature. Back a yard or so from where the boy stood there suddenly appeared an open gap between him and his would-be rescuer. It yawned wider, wider, until the narrow margin on which he stood trembled, swayed, crumbled, and gave way, leaving the terror-stricken man upon the very brink of the newer precipice. Shuddering, the crowd pressed back with exclamations of horror.

For a dreadful moment, Harry was engulfed, choking and suffocated; then he breathed the fresh air and his wits came to him. His forehead was throbbing and bleeding and his head swam. In his stunned, half-conscious state he kept saying over and over again, "Going home—going home—I'm going home," as the scattering mass bore him down. Perhaps it was because he had been thinking of his

mother just a little while before, or maybe in his half-delirium he did indeed think of Culebra Cut as his home, where he had worked so long and hard and faithfully.

He grasped at a patch of vegetation which held him a moment, then gave way and he was thrust against a rock at which he clutched. His forehead was bleeding freely, the blood and soil forming a mud which blinded him and made his eyes sting cruelly. The impact with the rock stunned him anew, and as he clung, dazed but frantically, to it he seemed to see the sun rising over the Cut's embankment as it did upon the face of the medal.

Voices were calling from above, but he could not answer. Presently he realized that he should be above the rock instead of hanging from it, for it would crush his life out if it broke away. Painfully he dragged himself up against the swift current of descending earth, gaining such uncertain safety as the upper side of the rock afforded, but he was soon half buried in the sliding débris which collected there.

He was fully conscious now and realized the peril he was in. If another rock from above should fall against this one, he would be ground between the two. Yet it would be equally perilous to venture out on the sliding mass, for below at the base of the embankment lay the jagged rocks which had been broken off by the blasting. His position, with fresh

débris engulfing him as fast as he could extricate himself, was indeed one of extreme peril.

Below in the Cut he could now distinguish more lights which moved about as if a desperate effort were being made to rescue the machinery which lay there. Panting, half-consciously, he said "82" to himself again and again; then he tried to call aloud, but his voice failed him.

Close to one of the distant lights he thought he saw a dark, thin line which seemed to extend up the embankment toward him for a short way and then disappear. At first he fancied it was only a freakish vision of his dazed and throbbing head, but the line persisted and as he gazed he could see that it extended toward him, now well above the surface of the moving débris, now passing through it. Then above him he was aware of a great mass of earth descending, through the scattering particles of which was visible a large black bulk. Sliding from the rock which held him he tried by the motions of swimming to counteract the sliding earth and reach the black line which was still discernible a few yards away. Even as he strove, like a drowning man, against the earthen tide, he heard the down-coming rock crash against his late refuge and both went bouldering past him into the darkness below.

Trembling, for fear the black line were but a vision of his dazed senses, he reached it at length and clutching at it, found that it was real! It was, in

fact, one of the compressed-air tubes which connected the drills in the bottom of the Cut with the main which ran along the brink. Though it was submerged in places, he was still able, by dexterously regaining his clutch here and there, to control his descent to a point where the pipe disappeared amid a confused mass of rock and soil at the base of the embankment.

Over this he clambered and limped along the bottom of the Cut among hurrying figures who were struggling by a score of ingenious makeshifts to remove or protect the excavating paraphernalia already half engulfed. A little farther along he recognized the familiar stack of old "82" rising out of a hill of earth and stone, like a tombstone to show where she lay buried. On an empty dynamite cask near by sat Mr. Barney, naked to the waist, with Mike beside him. They had moved "82" as far as they could from the main body of the slide and now were resting. Mr. Barney was panting audibly. Mike, a lantern at his feet, was smoking his clay pipe. It looked good to Harry in this emergency to see them sitting side by side gaining breath after the battle.

"Move up and let me sit down," he panted.

"Arnold! Where did you come from?"

"Oh, I don't know—up the bank—I'm here, anyway. What can I do?"

Mr. Barney, his elbows on his knees and his head

buried in his hands, shook his head. "Nothing till morning," he said grimly.

Mike took his pipe from his mouth and looking across Mr. Barney's bowed head, indicated to Harry the disappointment, the well-nigh broken spirit, which was pathetically apparent in the burly form of the shovelman.

"Did yer hear phwat the Ould Man wuz tellin' the people oop in the States?"

"Colonel Goethals?"

"Thot he'd hev a ship t'rough the Cut nixt year? An' look at this! Sure, we'll hev to dig the Cut ahl oover agin!"

Harry knew that the "Old Man" had but lately returned from the States and that his statements there, that a ship would pass through the Cut the following year, had been widely circulated. Then had come the first of the great slides and now this monster cave-in.

"Did you get your vacation slip, Arnold?" asked Barney, abstractedly, after some moments of silence following Harry's recital of his strange slide down the embankment.

"Yes, I got it."

"Well, you'd better go over to Cristobal and see King to-morrow. Don't let him send you up on the *Advance*. Go on the *Colon*, you'll get a better stateroom. There's a big crowd going and I don't want anything to prevent your getting started. If

King doesn't give you a room on deck see Berry, the purser. Tell him I said—"

"Don't, Mr. Barney, please."

"Why, what's the matter?"

"I'm not going on any vacation, Mr. Barney. I'm going to stay here and help. Please don't talk about it. I—I don't want to go away anywhere; I want to stay here and help."

"Nonsense," said Mr. Barney; "of course you're going."

"Mr. Barney," interrupted Harry, "please don't say any more about it. I've always obeyed you and followed your advice, but now I'm going to have my own way. I'm going to spend my vacation on 82; you can like it or not, as you please."

Mike reached around Mr. Barney and brought his great hand against Harry's back. Mr. Barney said not a word, but lifted his burly arm and rested it on the boy's opposite shoulder.

Thus they sat together where the grinding labor of two solid months had been undone, as it were, in the twinkling of an eye.

CHAPTER XVI

THE MEDAL

THUS came to an end Harry's first year on the Canal. Despite all entreaties, he spent his vacation time on old "82." He wrote to Mr. Conne explaining his sudden change of plans and expressing his regret that he could not go with them into the Balboa country. But, he wrote, Uncle Sam had treated him so well that he had inspired this loyal spirit. It was because Uncle Sam had been such a fine boss that he had now resolved to disobey him and refuse point-blank to go on a vacation. The letter was written in a gay, boyish vein to conceal the disappointment which Harry really felt. But it did not fool Mr. Conne at all, and he sent Harry a very characteristic reply.

DEAR HARRY BOY:—

I think you're entirely mistaken. You seem to think your Uncle Samuel makes fine boys, but I think the fine boys make Uncle Sam. He wouldn't be what he is if it wasn't for men and boys like yourself. You are congratulating yourself on having

such a good uncle, and I'm congratulating your uncle on having such good nephews. I'm awfully sorry you won't go with us, though.

As for the buried treasure, if there's any there (which I doubt) it has been there for fifty years or more and it'll stay there another six months. Don't worry. The boys and I will take a run up into Mexico and see the fighting, and we'll save the treasure hunt till next vacation time. That suit you?

Don't worry about Zamora and his revolution either. That won't amount to anything yet a while, if it ever does.

Good-by if we don't see you again. Work hard and look forward to the end of another year.

Hastily,

CARLETON CONNE.

P. S. We've adopted Pedro and he goes with us as private secretary and interpreter.

Harry plunged into his work with renewed vigor, and in the routine of each day's work and the fatigue which followed it Mr. Conne and his party and the proposed journey after treasure seemed like vague memories of the past. Only Vasco Nuñez de Balboa remained to recall those adventurous plans for which he had been responsible. Now that the project was laid by, he made no mystery of Balboa's tree, but was continually chat-

tering about it, and the gold whose hiding-place it marked, and of "balanas" and bananas and "poor Fred." The bird was good company and a real companion to Harry through that toilsome second year.

It was in that year that the most noticeable changes began to appear in the work; changes showing rapid progress and suggesting the near completion of the mighty task. The water was slowly rising in the great Gatun Lake, though still held back from the Cut by the dike at Gamboa. Scores of employees whose quarters had been in the territory now submerged, were distributed among the bungalows at Culebra, Empire, and other places along the line. Dozens of little thatched shacks standing three or four miles back from the line of the Canal, where Harry had so often in his Sunday rambles stopped and talked with the natives, were now deserted, bought by Uncle Sam and their former occupants moved off the Zone.

Day by day, the débris was being cleared from the bottom of the cavernous lock chambers, and the great emergency dams (safeguards in case the stupendous lock gates should give way or refuse to work) reared their ugly trestled forms across the lock chambers. The mammoth chains (safeguards again, in case the mechanism of the emergency dams should fail) hung sagging between the towering concrete walls, ready to challenge the

prow of the mightiest liner, if all were not well for her to pass.

Throughout that time the slides continued, and "82" was toppled over more than once and sometimes buried; but she worked her way indomitably, extricating herself from the submerging mass, and the great Cut widened and deepened as the weeks passed. Through all her varying adventures, buried or free, right side up or upside down, "82" clutched her precious record like grim death, her only fault being that she took such huge mouthfuls; but, as Mr. Barney observed, she was not made for manners.

The work in the Cut was coming to an end now; there were fewer shovels and fewer tracks and trains. Interest centered on the spillway in the middle of the great dam, which was being rushed to completion; and talk was rife on every hand of the "Old Man's" putting a ship through for an experiment before the year was out. Then dredges would replace the steam-shovels and the remaining excavation would be done in this cheaper and more expeditious way.

Another friend Harry missed during the latter part of the year, and that was Jack Holden. Jack had often joined them at scout meeting, and Harry had visited Camp Otis many times, where he never tired of watching the target practice. But Jack had been granted a two months' leave of absence and

was spending it in Jamaica with friends. Harry had gone to the steamer with him and had received one letter written upon Jack's arrival at the West Indian island. The soldier boy had spoken so sincerely at parting that it had increased the good opinion of him which had been growing in Harry's mind as the friendship of the two became more intimate. He had ceased to be troubled over Jack's disposition to make light of his obligation to Uncle Sam. He fancied the young soldier took a certain mischievous pleasure in trying to shock him, and that he was not really as rash and reckless as he wanted Harry to think he was. In any event, though Harry missed him, he did not apprehend any weak or foolish act on the part of his friend until one day he received a letter postmarked Kingston, Jamaica. It read:

DEAR OLD HARRY BOY:—

I know you for a good friend, so I'll let you into my plans; but be sure to tear this letter up and keep your mouth shut. I've got you at a good long distance, you old ditch-digger, so you can't talk me into changing my mind. Your uncle and I are going to part company—incompatibility of temperament, as they say. So if you see any photograph of me jumping off the train at Las Cascadas at the end of another month, you'll know it's not authentic, for friend Jack isn't going to come marching

home again, hurrah! If your old uncle with the plug hat wants to start a game of hide-and-seek with me, let him do it. He'll have a good run. But honestly, old man, I wish I could see you some more, and that we could stay friends. I like you about as well as any fellow I ever met. You're so blamed good it's contagious. Even I caught some of it, and that's all that's kept me from doing this sooner. To see you plugging away for that old piece of junk to hang round your neck, is as good as a circus.

But, honestly, Harry, old boy, I hope you get it—you've sure earned it. I've seen a lot of West Point boys, lieutenants and such (I've been saluting them for two years and I'm sick of it), and there's not one of 'em that's got the stuff in him that you have, and you can take that three times a day after meals from your true friend.

I'm hanging out here at the Sailors' refuge, for I don't need to be among the missing till near the first of the month. Then for my mysterious disappearance. But you'll hear from me again, Harry, when the old gent gets tired of the game.

I wish I had a job like yours, or that you and I could work together. You'll hear from me from Whitville, Missouri, some day in the sweet by-and-by, and I'll have you out to go fishing on the Mississippi. So good luck to you and so long until then. Harry, don't get sore on me, now. I'm not

so bad, only I couldn't stand the game—guess I wasn't born for a harness.

But, old man, if I thought there was any chance of your missing that piece of junk and I could help you to get it, I'd beat it back to little old Panama, just as sure as my name's

JACK HOLDEN.

A piece of junk! Yes, that is all it was, if you looked at it in that way. Just a worthless bit of metal taken from the antiquated French machinery, lying disused and overgrown along the old discarded canal which the French had started and which had ended in failure and disaster.

Just a bit of junk.

And for this Harry had slaved for nearly two years. Strange it should have such a value to him. Yet he set greater store by it—yes, than by anything he possessed. He had said that to himself many times—*than anything he possessed!*

Than friendship?

Than generosity?

Than character?

Perhaps he had never taken a full inventory of his possessions. Could the medal of which he had thought and dreamed and for which he had striven so long and faithfully—could this have a rival?

Was it, indeed, nothing but a piece of junk?

You will have to decide that for yourself, Harry.

CHAPTER XVII

GORDON LORD FINDS A WAY

ALL through that day Harry was haunted by thoughts of Jack, and at night, weary though he was, he could not sleep. The reckless tone of the letter, setting danger at defiance and belittling the chance of capture, did not deceive him, and he remembered what Mr. Barney had said that evening of the first scout meeting: that Uncle Sam would not fail to trace and ferret out a deserter and bring him back to certain disgrace and punishment. He could not bear to think of Uncle Sam in such a rôle. In vain he tried to console himself with the reflection that the deserter knows what to expect and deserves his punishment. Thoughts of Jack's mother and sister kept forcing themselves upon his mind.

He worked the next day with desperate energy, trying to forget the letter; but he could not. It haunted him so that when evening came the strain of it told upon him more than his work and he was little better than a wreck when he threw himself into his chair and gave himself up to thinking of Jack Holden and his almost certain fate.

All day long there had persisted in his mind one

thought which he had tried to banish. And now it came again. He knew that nothing he could write would influence Jack. *But might he not go to Jamaica and bring him back?* There was time enough—one solid month. And Uncle Sam owed him six weeks, too. But Uncle Sam's ways were slow and complicated, and by the time a formal leave could work around to him this last fatal month of Jack Holden's freedom would have passed and Jack would be a fugitive.

Harry had always thought that his first and highest duty was loyalty to those who employed him. That was the gospel he had preached to Mike. "Well, an' how about his frind?" Mike had said; though Mike, after all, had been loyal. But that was a question between loyalty and treachery. This was different.

It seemed to Harry that two duties confronted him, and he did not know which was the higher. How should he judge? The scout way, he thought at last, would be to choose the most unselfish way, the way which left himself most out of consideration and which most increased the welfare and happiness of others.

As he sat thinking the medal seemed to melt away before his eyes and resolve itself, indeed, into a piece of junk. In its place there rose before him the familiar words of the good scout maxim,—that a good turn is indestructible, that it persists and lives

forever with an influence always for the good. Had not his own good turn, his reckless act in saving little Pedro, come to his rescue in a moment of peril?

After all, he ruminated, he would be the principal sufferer if he went away, for he would forfeit the medal; but if he tore up this letter and forgot Jack Holden, then not only Jack himself but his mother and sister up there in Whitville, Missouri, would suffer for his selfishness. Perhaps it would leave them in want, certainly in shame.

The longer he thought about it, the stronger became the conviction in his mind that the imprisonment of one person and the shame and sorrow and, perhaps, privation of two others were a very high price to pay for a piece of junk.

Yet, he wanted that piece of junk; oh, how much he wanted it!

He wished he could shift this whole perplexing question to another's shoulders. He wondered what Mr. Conne would say, or Colonel Goethals. He knew very well what Mr. Barney would think about it, for he made no allowance for weakness and all the sadness and sorrow it might lead to. He knew what Mrs. Barney would say. She would settle the matter very easily by following the direction of her own sweet, noble instinct.

Out of the two frames on the mantel looked down the faces of Washington and Lincoln, and the sad eyes of the martyred President were looking straight

at Harry. He wondered what Lincoln would do in such a case, or Washington. But they could not advise him; they just looked at him steadily and soberly as if waiting to know what *he* would do.

Then his eyes fell on the picture of Marjorie Danforth which stood on his dresser, and he smiled a little as he thought how she had begged him not to be a "what-do-you-call-it." What would she say now if she knew of his trouble?

He buried his head in his hands and thought, and when he had sat so for several minutes he sat up and pounded the arm of his Morris chair with a resolute bang.

"I won't be a quitter for anybody that lives," he said, and with a fine show of determination he started to undress.

But instead of undressing he put on his cap and creeping quietly down the stairs, stole out and down the embankment into the great, dark, silent Cut.

How still it was! There were the steam-shovels standing, black and grim, beside the precipice; the empty dirt-trains, and the deserted drills. No soul was about. Here was the scene of nearly two years' toil for him, where every day of honest, sweating, grinding labor had helped to hew this mighty cañon out of the everlasting hills and rock, and had brought him nearer to the coveted medal.

He made his way along through the darkness till

he came to "82," the canvas tarpaulin thrown over her crane, just as Mike had left her. He sat down on the edge of the great dipper between two of its huge steel teeth, and looked about him at the work in which he had borne a part. He had come to have a profound respect for all this powerful machinery; his boyish imagination had made it seem human, just as he had come to think of Uncle Sam as a real live personage—his boss. But now it occurred to him that all these resistless, indomitable machines had never any perplexing questions to settle; that they just did their work coldly, heartlessly, with a kind of blind power. After all, that was easier than to have to decide such a question as confronted him.

He thought of the honor he had almost won. Then he thought of the wretched soldier, and of the doom which was almost certain to overtake him, soon or late. He could save Jack from it.

As he looked at the vast excavation all about him and at the machinery which had done the great work, at the powerful steel drill which went straight through its allotted task, heedless of obstacles and obstructions, he realized that after all there is nothing so powerful, so splendid, as character; that the mightiest machines are but pigmies compared with it. To think out for himself and without considering himself, what was right and generous and noble, and then to go straight to his end, just as the relentless steam drill went straight to its end, that was

the determination which came to him as he sat there alone in the darkness.

Then he thought of what Mr. Conne had written; that Uncle Sam is what we make him, nothing more.

“And if that medal,” he said aloud, his voice trembling, “if that medal comes to me through sorrow and trouble which I might have prevented, then it is nothing but a piece of junk—and—and—” his voice broke, “I don’t want it.”

The next morning Tom Bonney found a note under his door asking him to turn Vasco Nuñez over to Mike Kerrigan, and Mike received a note asking him to take care of the bird until Harry returned.

In Cristobal, before boarding the fruit liner for Kingston, Harry called at the post office and received a letter which he did not open until the Isthmus had faded from his view and the ship was plowing her way through the blue waters of the Caribbean.

Then he read it:

DEAR HARRY:—

I’ve found a way! Don’t ask any questions—I haven’t got time to answer them. I’m coming to Panama. We’re going down the Mississippi in a motor-boat. So now who has another guess? What did I tell you? Even Marjorie Danforth says the

laugh is on you. She has two cylinders and a reverse gear (I mean the boat). And she says by the time we get there you'll just be getting your medal, I told her maybe you were a quitter and gave up, and she got mad as a— Oh, another thing, my uncle had her lengthened to forty feet because the bow was too near the stern.

How are you getting along? I'm starting for St. Louis to-night; that's where my uncle lives—you know, the one with two sons. They're both jolliers, but I can handle them. Never fear!

I got my tennis ball out of the drainpipe all right, so that's another one on you. We're coming right down the river from St. Louis in the footsteps of La Salle and De Soto and Huck Finn—I don't mean footsteps, but anyway where they canoed. Oh, Harry, won't it be great? Talk about adventures! Harry, it'll be a lesson to you never to laugh at what I say again. Dr. Brent says I won't have much chance to do good turns on the boat except to turn the fly-wheel, and Marjorie Danforth said, "Oh, does it fly?" Harry, aren't girls crazy? Her name is the *Scout*. My cousins are scouts. One of them's got a birthmark on his neck, but it doesn't show; the other's got two examinations to pass before he starts—but he's a nice fellow just the same.

Good-by, Harry. Whenever I want to make Marjorie Danforth *wild* I tell her I guess you gave up

and are in Cuba or Alaska or some other tropical place. So you see I was right after all—I'm coming to Panama! Excelsior, Eureka, and a few other things. You'll see me in about a month.

Your chum,

GORDON LORD (Beaver).

CHAPTER XVIII

GORDON ACCEPTS A CHALLENGE

GORDON always claimed that it was owing directly and wholly to a good turn done by himself that all the adventures which followed were brought about. Being a scout, and a very scoutish scout at that, he naturally had a prejudice in favor of good turns, and for all I know he may have exaggerated their potency. But he maintained that a good turn was a safe investment, and it is a fact which Red Deer, his scoutmaster, cheerfully admitted, that practically all of Gordon's triumphs and adventures could be traced to some little act of kindness or courtesy or generosity on his part.

In any event, he was doing a service to Miss Bannard,—but let me tell you how it happened. Gordon was sitting on the wide veranda of his home trying, by way of a novel stunt, to eat an apple with one hand in his pocket and a huge catching-mitt on the other, when along came Miss Bannard carrying a suit-case. So what must Gordon do but carry the suit-case down town for her, and on the way he offered to bet her two reels and a lead-pencil eraser that she couldn't eat an apple with a catching-mitt.

on. Miss Bannard, who was considerably over eighty years old, thought she wouldn't try it.

While they were in the post office, the postmaster called through his little window, "That you, Gordon?"

"That's me," said Gordon.

"I thought you were down at Atlantic City."

"We're not going till next week," said Gordon.

"Well, here's a letter I was just going to forward to you."

Now, Gordon's argument was this: that if he hadn't carried the suit-case for Miss Bannard, the letter would have been forwarded to Atlantic City and he wouldn't have received it in time—but no matter; you will be more interested in the letter itself.

OLIVE COURT,
ST. LOUIS, MO.

DEAR GORDON:—

How would you like to go and see the Panama Canal? Dad is going down there to get some statistics and look around, and Joe and I have persuaded him to take the cruising launch and let us go with him. Mother said we'd better write and see if you couldn't go along, and we thought that was a cracker-jack idea. It will give Joe and me a chance to get square with you for some of the jollying you gave us when we were East. If you come, you come at your peril—but be sure to come.

Joe says you better come fully armed, and mother says to bring gauze shirts. She says it would be good to bring along your birthday-book and I said I'd tell you, but don't bother with it.

I haven't got much time to write because I have two exams. to pass before going and we're all busy piling things into the *Scout*. She's been lengthened to forty feet.

We're going to have one grand old time, and if you think you can stand the strain, start as soon as you possibly can. Wire us and we'll meet you at the station.

Your cousin,

WILL HOWELL.

P. S. We dare you to come.

Now this was not the way to frighten Master Gordon Lord. As an adventure, he wouldn't have missed it; and as a dare, he would have scorned not to accept it. The postscript alone was sufficient to decide him. Afraid? Not he! Of that pair of jolliers? New Jersey afraid of Missouri? Go? Would he!

He hitched up his stocking as a sort of battle-sign, as if he were ready for anything, and started up the hill, excitedly reading the letter to Miss Bannard.

"Wouldn't *you* go?" he asked, as he trudged along at her side.

"I?" She smiled. "Oh, I'm too old," and then she added hesitatingly, "and I'm afraid you're too young."

There were a few moments of silence as the excited boy and the old lady walked up the shaded street together. They were good friends, these two, and were often seen in company. Miss Bannard lived alone in a little cottage near the Lords and it was rumored in town that she was very poor, but she was very respectable and old-fashioned and everybody liked her. She had lived in Oakwood ever since the time when it was called "Carver's Town," before the railroad was heard of, "and when," she would add, smoothing down her ruffled lace collar, "there was no such word as *commuter*." Gordon used to mow Miss Bannard's patch of lawn and do many other little things for her, and so a sort of comradeship had sprung up between them.

"Of course," said Miss Bannard, "it would be nice to go, but I can never think of a boy going away from home, without a shudder. I've no doubt a resourceful boy like yourself will go and have all the pleasure that I hope you will have, and come back safe and sound, but if you were *my* boy I'm afraid I should not let you go. You see, when I was a young girl, many, many years ago, I had a brother who went away—and—and—well, I have not seen him since. So I have a prejudice against young

boys going away from home," she added, looking at him thoughtfully.

Gordon was rather uneasy as they passed his own beautiful home, standing well back upon its spacious lawn, for he had a haunting fear that Miss Bannard might stop and communicate this unreasonable prejudice to the susceptible ear of his mother; but when they had safely passed this rock of peril he ventured to ask her more about the brother who had gone away.

"It was many years ago," she said; "he would be a very old man if he were living now. Come up on the porch and rest a little while. If you really go away, I may not see you again for a long time."

Gordon did not know very much about Miss Bannard's history. She had lived alone in this little cottage ever since he could remember, and he had an idea that she was much poorer than she would let any one know. He had accidentally discovered that his father was in the habit of helping her secretly, and his father had forbidden him ever to mention the fact to any one.

He sat down on the neat little vine-covered porch, and there she told him what little there was to that sad story of long ago.

"There were just the four of us," she said, "my mother and father and myself—and—my brother. He was older than you—eighteen—and he had some words with my father—and—left home. Dear,

foolish boy, he said he was going to the war and that when he came back he would bring a great fortune, enough for us two to have a home together and be comfortable and happy all our lives. He stood right here, leaning against this rail; it was new then, you see how rickety it is now—”

“That’s all right,” said Gordon, uncomfortably, seeing how affected she was; “I can fix it for you, it just needs a brace.”

“Well, this is where he said good-by to me, and I thought—we all thought—that he would get over his anger and be home again before night. We never dreamed that he would really go away. But the time went on and my mother and father died, and I have lived here alone ever since. So you see, it is natural for me to shudder when I think of a young boy going away so far from home. Come in and I will show you his picture,” she added.

Gordon went in, and she showed him the half of a locket in which was the faded picture of a boy. “The other half of this locket he wore when he went away,” she said. “It contained my picture.”

As Gordon stood in the simple, old-fashioned little parlor and watched the thin, trembling hand which held the locket, the poor little house took on a new interest for him and his mind wandered back to those old days when on the very porch where he had been sitting, the brother and sister had parted, never to meet again.

"I—I'll come up and say good-by to you, Miss Bannard, before I go," he said; "and—and I'll fix that rail on the porch, and you can't tell, you know you can't tell, Miss Bannard, he may have been delayed; he may come home yet. Anyway," he added, "*I'll come back.*"

"Yes, you must," said the old lady, gently, "I'm afraid I couldn't stand another blow." And she brushed back the curly hair from his brown face and kissed his forehead.

Before he left, he did go in and say good-by to Miss Bannard, and she gave him a little package which she said contained something that he must keep to remember her by since they were such chums.

It was not till he was sitting in the train which was bearing him westward that he opened the package and found it to contain the half of the locket which had held the picture of Miss Bannard's brother. But she had taken the picture out and in its place had put in one of herself, cut from a photograph which Gordon himself had taken with his Brownie camera.

His father had given him a new watch that morning as a parting gift, and on the fob of this he fastened the quaint little golden trinket, opening and closing the little gold ring which held it, by a dexterous use of a brass baggage check.

"You can accomplish wonders with a baggage

check," said a pleasant old gentleman who sat next to him and who had been watching the operation.

"It's nothing compared to a hairpin," said Gordon. "You can do *anything* with a hairpin if you know how."

"Indeed?" said the old gentleman, smiling.

CHAPTER XIX

DOWN THE MISSISSIPPI

A TELEGRAM sent by Mr. Lord announced the departure of Gordon from New York, and when he alighted from the train in St. Louis his two cousins, Will and Joe Howell, were there to take him in hand. Joe was fifteen and Will sixteen. Within ten minutes of their vociferous greeting, Gordon understood that he must be on his guard, for he had to deal with two very wideawake scouts, of the true western brand of manufacture, and operating on their own territory, which, as every general knows, is an advantage.

The Howells lived in one of the pretty residential courts not far from Forest Park, and the boys boarded an Olive Street car, Gordon's luggage distributed between them.

"We'll get home in time for supper, all right," said Will.

"Oh, sure," answered Joe; "it's only six now."

"It's only five," said Gordon, consulting his new watch.

"You're an hour slow," said Will.

"What are you talking about?" exclaimed Gordon. "This watch is brand new—"

"Can't help that, it's slow just the same."

If they had denounced his idol, Harry Arnold, as a thief or a traitor, Gordon could scarcely have felt more highly insulted than at this disrespect for his new watch.

"You're crazy! My watch keeps perfect time!" he said. "It doesn't lose a second!"

Will and Joe, unaffected by his excitement, glanced coldly at the beautiful, gold-encased Waltham which their cousin held proudly in his hand.

"That must be just a toy watch," said Will.

"Sure it is," Joe answered.

"That shows how much you know," said Gordon. "I'll show you where it's guaranteed!"

"Oh, we don't care anything about that," said Joe. "I'll leave it to that man across the car what time it is."

The man appealed to looked at his own watch with an amused smile and announced, "Six o'clock."

"There you are," said Will.

"What time is it?" Joe asked the conductor, who was passing.

"Six o'clock," said the conductor, consulting his watch.

"Why didn't your father get you a good one while he was about it?" asked Joe, scornfully.

"Oh, I don't suppose it's meant really to keep time," said his brother.

Gordon was nonplussed, humiliated, silent. After

a moment, the young man across the car beckoned to him.

"You must set your watch for western time, my boy, then you'll be all right. And don't let them jolly you."

This was Gordon's first encounter with his St. Louis cousins, and it put him on his guard against similar attempts on their part. For instance, they told him that their patrol had performed the colossal feat of "hiking all the way to Illinois," at which he expressed his wonder and admiration until he learned from Mrs. Howell that a "hike" to Illinois consisted of a five-minute walk across the bridge from St. Louis. And so it went.

The three boys were good friends for all that, for Gordon was not only a true scout, he was also "mascot of the Beavers," and guaranteed not to lose his temper under any amount of wholesome jollyng.

Mr. Howell was a civil engineer, connected with the Bureau of Standards in Washington, and it was his business to travel about the country with a satchel full of queer-looking instruments with which he recorded degrees of strain, tested pressures, and did other strange things on bridges, trestles, and public works generally, for the purpose of making statistics. He was now starting for the Isthmus with such work in view, and Will and Joe had tested *his* pressure under persuasion, and subjected his

power of resistance to such a perilous strain that it finally gave way and he consented to take the cruising launch and let the boys go along. It had always been their dream to go all the way down the Mississippi, and now, with Gordon as one of the party, the trip bade fair to be as pleasant an excursion as a group of boys could hope to have.

The morning after Gordon's arrival the three went down to "Shanty-boat Town," the district along the river front where all the houseboats are moored; a little city of water craft, indeed, and the strangest water craft that Gordon had ever seen. He began now to learn something of the great river which forms a home to many people who go on land only at rare intervals for provisions or repairs. Few of these boats had power, most of them being merely little shanties, home-made and ramshackle, built upon stanch floats; though a few were more pretentious, having muslin window curtains and other suggestions of home comfort. Some of them were fitted up as stores of various kinds, barber shops, dry goods stores, drug stores, and some as tiny theaters with stage and seats for audience.

On these boats a goodly population of "river people" live and make their livings, floating down the great stream, mooring now and then, tarrying here and there as trade or fancy or weather suggest, until they reach the great gulf, and are then towed back by steamers or other power boats going upstream.

It was a strange, romantic, gipsy life of which Gordon here had a glimpse, suggestive of the vastness of the "Father of Waters," which has a population of its own, a Bohemian, wandering, care-free set, who live and buy and sell, and ply back and forth, back and forth, upon its wide, winding, hurrying expanse, as it flows southward to the sea.

Among these strange, ramshackle craft, lay Mr. Howell's forty-foot cruising launch. She had a hunting-cabin half her length, and her deck aft was furnished with a khaki-colored awning with falling sides. She had a fat, chubby, clumsy look, as if she had been out of training for a long time, but she was a good, amiable boat and stood for no end of abuse and good-natured banter. Her name was *Scout*, but she was called many things besides her name. By lifting a trap in her cabin flooring level with the lockers on either side and spreading a mattress over the whole, there was room for two to sleep, and two more could easily sleep upon a mattress in the canvas cabin aft.

She had been well stocked with provisions for the trip, and to these the boys now added a few additional things. They spent the morning cleaning her up and cramping her stores into smaller space, and late that afternoon Mr. Howell came aboard. At five o'clock they were chugging down the great river, while Mrs. Howell and her daughter stood on the quay waving their handkerchiefs.

"Isn't it great!" said Gordon. "We're following right in the footsteps of La Salle. You know, he sailed down this river and explored it—"

"He never sailed down here," said Will Howell.

"Of course he did," vociferated Gordon. "Any history book will tell you that! He did it in sixteen—sixteen—something or other—"

"Sixteen minutes, western time?" suggested Joe.

"After walking all the way from Illinois," added Will.

"You're wrong there, Gordon. La Salle never sailed down here," Joe repeated.

"La Salle *did* sail down the Mississippi," said Gordon, conclusively.

"Oh, maybe he did," said Will; "that's different."

"How is it different?" demanded Gordon. "Isn't this the Mississippi?"

"Sure."

"Well, then."

"But La Salle never sailed down here, and you can't sail down where he did either."

"Didn't La Salle sail down the Mississippi?" demanded Gordon, again.

"Sure."

"And isn't this the Mississippi?"

"Sure."

Mr. Howell came to Gordon's rescue. "This is a very peculiar river, my boy. It's a sort of tramp

river and changes its course every now and then. Nearly the whole of the thousand miles which your old friend La Salle sailed down is now dry land, owing to the fact that the river is four or five miles west of its old position. So I'm afraid your old Frenchman would have to take an automobile or a bicycle if he wanted to go over the same route to-day."

Gordon subsided. "It seems to me everything in this world is crazy," he observed after a few minutes' silence. "Now, you take the sun; what do you think it does down in Panama? It rises out of the Pacific instead of the Atlantic. The Atlantic is way around west of the Pacific down there. It's crazy, it seems to me."

"Of course," said Joe, "and you know what made it crazy, don't you? Why, the Mississippi being crazy, when the water from it flowed into the Atlantic Ocean, it—"

"I guess we'd better have supper now, hadn't we, boys?" interrupted Mr. Howell.

CHAPTER XX

FRIENDS IN NEED

WE cannot take account of the happenings of each day as the *Scout* moved southward upon the hurrying current of the great river. It must be confessed that the hurrying current did more for her than ever she dreamed of doing for herself, but Gordon said that her misbehavior was the best part of the program; that a delay or an accident was simply another name for an adventure; that a gas engine which behaved itself was a monotonous thing at best, and unnatural besides, like a baby that doesn't cry.

"If it goes all right all the time, that's a sure sign there must be something the matter with it," he said, "just the same as I heard our scoutmaster say that the strongest, healthiest people are the ones that get seasick; if you're weak and delicate, you don't get seasick—you're not well enough to get sick, don't you see? And it's just the same," he concluded, taking a mammoth bite out of the apple he was holding, "it's just the same with a gas engine."

Before they were out of the upper river (that is, above the point where it converges with the Ohio

about one hundred and fifty miles below St. Louis), they had their first adventure, which came very near being their last as well. It was what Gordon (who was recognized as an adventure expert) defined as a "hair-breadth escape"; "the kind they have in Henty," he explained, and he added that on an expedition hair-breadth escapes were indispensable things, "You have to have them."

But Mr. Howell protested that they were very unnecessary things and swore, by all the nautical terms he knew, that he would sell the *Scout* if they were ever so fortunate as to reach New Orleans and he could find any one fool enough to buy her.

The weather had been pleasant and their trip idle and delightful, when on the third evening they turned the prow of their gallant bark in the direction of a little woody island close to the Missouri shore, intending to camp there over night.

"We'll be the uninvited guests of old Kentucky," said Mr. Howell, "and for my part, I shall be glad of a chance to stretch myself."

Gordon looked at the green, sloping shore far to the right, then at the marshy tract which skirted the opposite shore. Then he looked searchingly at his uncle. Will and Joe winked at each other.

"Isn't that the Missouri shore over where that island is?" he asked, feeling his way carefully.

"Oh, yes," said Mr. Howell, "but you see Kentucky's land sometimes runs away from her. Now,

when I was a young man that little island used to nestle up comfortably right under the wing of its mother, Kentucky. Then one fine day old Mississippi took a freak, shifted her course a few hundred yards, and presto, there was Kentucky's little island way over close to Missouri. The people on it didn't know whether they belonged to Kentucky or Missouri. They finally moved over to the Kentucky shore, leaving this runaway island to shift for itself. The courts decided that it was still Kentucky land."

"It seems to me—" began Gordon, but that was as far as he got.

An ominous scraping sound beneath caused them all to start. Joe came rolling down off the cabin roof into the cockpit as the bow of the *Scout* rose, and Will and Gordon scrambled forward as the stern dipped. For a moment all was confusion, and Mr. Howell looked apprehensive. From the way the boat rocked, her bow and stern plunging alternately, it was clear that she was balanced amidships upon some submerged obstacle. The cockpit was half filled with water, which washed forward into the cabin and astern again with every see-sawing lunge of the boat. They sat upon the after edge of the cabin roof about amidships, while below them packages of crackers and other edibles came floating out of the cabin, cruising frantically about the cockpit and disappearing into the cabin again.

"Well, I guess here's an adventure for you, Gordon," said his uncle, ruefully.

"Is—is it serious?" stammered Gordon. "Because an adventure is no good unless you live to tell it. An adventure when you die or get drowned is no good."

"Maybe she'll slide off if we all get in the stern," suggested Will.

"No, I'm afraid not, Will," said his father. "That would only dip her more and we'd ship too much water. Let's see how deep it is here."

They found that it was not deep and that they were balanced very nicely upon what seemed to be a dead tree-trunk. They tried to swing the boat about by pulling and pushing with the boathook, but it only made matters worse. She was evidently perched directly across it, and the change of her position from the right angle caused her to lurch ominously. Moreover, there was danger that her propeller, or shaft, might be brought into contact with the tree and damaged.

Darkness was coming on rapidly, and it was evident, both from the precarious position of the boat and from the fact that she was nearly half full of water, that they could not remain on her over night.

"I'll get the horn and blow it," said Gordon, "and maybe some one on shore will hear it."

This seemed to be the only thing to do, and Gordon, drenched but laughing, presently emerged from

the cabin and proceeded to blow the horn with such gusto that within a few minutes they were rewarded by the sight of figures on the land, and then a row-boat put out from the shore. It contained a girl of about seventeen, who managed her boat with perfect ease, bringing it alongside the *Scout's* cockpit like an experienced seaman. She had evidently laid down her household duties to come to them, for she wore a gingham apron which completely covered her from her neck down. She had merry blue eyes and light hair, and was inclined to laugh at their predicament, which rather astonished Gordon.

"Oh, you're right on the middle of Coleman's Tree," she said; "isn't that too silly! And you'll never get off until the men come home; you'll have to come ashore and stay all night. Do you like doughnuts?" she added, turning suddenly upon Gordon.

Gordon, panting from his prolonged vocal effort, stood gaping at her, the horn dangling at his side.

"I like turnovers better," he said.

"Well, you came jolly near to having a turnover, I reckon!" she laughed. "Can you get in here?"

To tell the truth, this was not at all to Gordon's taste. That a party of boys, and a man into the bargain, should be rescued by a girl was bad enough, but that the girl should laugh at them and make light of their adventure was altogether too much.

Mr. Howell, pleasantly taking further responsibility from the girl, got the whole party safely into the little boat and rowed it ashore. Here she led the way to a pleasant little cottage a few yards back from the river, in the doorway of which stood a woman who welcomed them cordially.

It appeared that Coleman's Tree had a bad reputation in the neighborhood. Their hospitable hostess would hear of nothing but that they should remain over night, and in the morning, she said, the men in the vicinity would help them pull the *Scout* off her precarious pedestal. There was nothing else for the luckless voyagers to do; so with many expressions of regret for the trouble they were causing, Mr. Howell consented, and she showed them to a cosy but somewhat bare, little room, where she kindled a fire in an old-fashioned air-tight stove. Here they dried their clothing and made themselves as presentable as possible.

"Well," said Mr. Howell, holding his coat this way and that before the red-hot stove, "is this adventure enough for you, Gordon?"

"It's not much of an adventure when a girl rescues you," said Gordon; "that's the only objection I have to it. Girls are made to be rescued—not to rescue people. But, of course," he added, "she's a fine girl, and if she were a scout she could get the bronze medal for that."

When they went downstairs the table was crowded

with an abundance of homely fare, and Mrs. Holden told them to "set right down."

"He doesn't like doughnuts, mother," said the girl.

"Yes, I do," said Gordon.

"You said you didn't—you said you liked turn-overs better."

But the proof of the pudding is in the eating, and when the simple meal was over the opinion of all was that Gordon did like doughnuts.

After supper the four young people wandered out to see the girl's menagerie, which consisted of a family of rabbits, a bantam rooster, and a water-trough full of turtles.

"Do you like cats?" she said. "I hate cats, but I like pollywogs. What's your name?"

"Gordon isn't a first name," she commented, after a general exchange of names had been made. "It's a last name. My name's Martha, but I hate it. My brother's name is Jack."

"Oh, have you a brother?" asked Joe Howell.

"Yes, that was his room you were in. He's down in Panama now."

"Why, that's where we're going," said Gordon. "Does your brother work on the Canal?"

"No, he's in the army. Don't you think it's fine to be a soldier?"

"Girls always like soldiers," said Gordon.

"That's because they're brave," said Martha. "I

wonder if you'll see my brother down there?" she added, a little wistfully.

"I've got a friend that's as brave as any soldier," Gordon said. "He's down in Panama, too; he's got a parrot."

"That shows how brave he is," said Will Howell.

"Silly!" Martha said. "Can he talk?"

"Oh, yes," said Joe. "He's a smart fellow; he can write, too; he's head of Gordon's patrol. We've been hearing a whole lot about him all the way down. Will and I are going to be introduced to him if we're good."

"To the parrot?" said the girl.

"No, to Gordon's friend; he's the champion."

"Champion at what?"

"Oh, at everything."

Gordon disdained to notice this sarcasm. "He's been working on the Canal for nearly two years," he said, "and when the two years are up he's going to get a medal from the government."

"If he doesn't flunk," put in Joe.

"He never flunks," Gordon informed the girl, confidentially; "and everything he tries to do he always succeeds in."

As they sauntered on ahead of the cousins whose presence he so much dreaded when he talked of Harry, they fell to comparing notes about those two, the brother and the friend, who in different ways were serving Uncle Sam at Panama. Gordon

told her of the wonderful things his friend had done, how he had risked his life to save him, Gordon, and how— “Why,” he said, to make the picture more vivid, “he would save your brother’s life just as soon as he would mine, and if he tried he’d surely succeed, because he always succeeds.”

“He must be a hero,” said the girl.

“He is,” Gordon answered.

CHAPTER XXI

THE MESSAGE TO OVANDO

THREE days after leaving Colon Harry Arnold entered the Sailors' Refuge in Kingston, the capital of the British island of Jamaica, and was told that Jack was no longer there. The superintendent, an Englishman, was rather curious about his errand, which made Harry curious to know what the man might know or suspect about Jack. But whatever suspicion lurked in his mind, the official gave no hint of it, and Harry wandered out into the strange city without the faintest clue. Jack had evidently decided not to wait until the last minute before he made his "mysterious disappearance."

Often, in his summer outings with the scouts at home, Harry had practiced in wood and field the delightful art of tracking, and once he had put this accomplishment to profitable account in tracing a criminal. To him the commonplace footprints of a human being spoke a language, and a broken twig or bit of ruffled foliage often gave its hint of some recent passer-by. The woods, the grassy meadows, the winding streams, kept few secrets from him, and when he knelt or crouched or stretched him-

self upon the grass, old Mother Earth would usually communicate some trifling hint to aid him in his quest.

But that was the art of the Indian and the trapper, of the forest runner. Here, in this populous, seething town, were needed the more sordid though equally acute arts of the detective. Harry wondered what General Sir Baden-Powell would do in his place, but the only comfort he got from these reflections was the recollection of the General's laconic advice to scouts on trail: "Use your brains—always your brains *first*; then your hands and feet, and nose and ears, and every sense you have. *But your brains first.*"

So Harry said to himself, "If I were in Jack's place, what should I do?"

He turned about and reëntered the Sailors' Refuge. "Excuse me just a minute more," he said to the man at the desk. "I suppose you know Holden is an American soldier. Of course, I don't suppose he wore his uniform here?"

"What is he? A deserter?" asked the man, crisply.

"No, sir, he is not; he is a soldier on leave."

"Huh; we thought he was something different from what he said. We can usually tell a sailor here, and we knew he was no sailor, so we asked him to go. I don't know where he went; if I did, I'd tell you. What's the matter? Is he in any trouble?"

Harry looked straight at him. "He is in the Tenth Regiment of Infantry in Panama," he said, "and he has a leave of absence which expires the first of next month; then—"

"Then he'll be a deserter, eh?" finished the man, shortly. "I see."

"No, sir, he will not be a deserter," said Harry.

Attracted by his frank, boyish bearing, the man swung around in his chair and looked at him sharply. "You mean you've come all the way from Panama after him?"

"Yes, sir."

"Well, I'd like to help you," said the man, running his hand through his hair, thoughtfully.

"Well, then, will you please answer one more question? I suppose I might go to the American Consul, but I'd rather not. Has the United States a treaty with England? Would you send him back if he were caught here after his time expired?"

"We certainly would."

"Is there any place where they wouldn't send him back?"

The man thought a moment.

"I wouldn't have you running off on a wild-goose chase because of anything I might tell you," he said, "but it's just possible this might give you a clue. There's a fellow down at Morant Point, a negro named Capot. He's quite a character. His business is hiding people who are in trouble. He was up here

the other day talking with your friend, and that's what made us a little suspicious that maybe the boy was a fugitive, or something of that sort, you know. Now, don't base any hopes of finding him on what I tell you, and if you take my advice you won't go down Morant way at all. But Capot sometimes ships people over to Jeremie in a schooner, where they lie low, sometimes go away, and more often get robbed and killed."

"Jeremie?" queried Harry.

"Yes, that's way up at this end of the Haitian peninsula, just across the Windward Passage. I've heard all kinds of stories about Capot, and I guess most of them are true. He used to be Customs Inspector at Haiti, and I guess he stole all he ever collected. If you're sufficiently interested in your friend to go down as far as Morant, why, I don't know as I'd discourage you; though, of course, there may be nothing in their having met here. Morant's only about twenty-five miles, you know. But don't be fool enough to ship over to Haiti, they're a band of cutthroats and cannibals over there; but you couldn't do that, anyway, there are no ships leaving Morant except Capot's schooner, and you couldn't get aboard her."

Harry left the office with certain words the man had used ringing in his head; "Haiti," "Windward Passage." They brought back to his thoughts that first night out of New York on the *Ancon*, nearly

two years before, when he had sat in the smoking-room and listened to the gentlemen talking.

He made his way to a little shop he had seen, and bought a compass. Within an hour he was sitting by a Jamaica negro on the high seat of an empty fruit wagon, starting for Morant Point. All day they journeyed eastward, over hill and through valley, on the narrow road that wound its way amid the glorious foliage and floral wonders of a hundred gorgeous hues which crowded in picturesque profusion in the beautiful "garden island." Next day the wagon would come back over this same road, loaded with fruit for shipment from Spanish Town and Kingston.

"Yo come back with me?" asked the laughing negro.

"I don't know," said Harry.

It was night when they reached Morant Point, and he inquired about the little village for Capot. Most of those he saw were negroes, some of whom admitted knowing Capot; others shook their heads. The nearest approach to information that he received was that a schooner had been at anchor off the point a few days before and had gone away. Evidently, those who knew of Capot and his dark business did not choose to talk about him with strangers.

Disheartened, he strolled out of the settlement and along the rocky shore. It seemed that his quest

was at an end. He took the compass from his pocket and tossed it from one hand to the other. "I wonder what on earth I bought that thing for, anyway," he said to himself. "Crazy thing to do!" Then he dropped it, and lighted match after match before he found it again. "The blamed thing's no use," said he, putting his finger around its edge as if to scale it into the ocean. But instead, he put it in his pocket, thinking he might possibly find a use for it some day.

He was on the extreme eastern end of Jamaica, and the waters of the restless, treacherous Caribbean were breaking against the rugged shore almost at his feet. The night was dark and the dashing of the breakers had an ominous, ghostly sound. It was so lonely and isolated that he looked back now and then at the cheering lights of the little settlement of Morant Point, beacons to guide him back when he should choose to end his lonely stroll.

"Well, I've done all I could," he said, kicking a stone down into the sea. "If he's gone, he's gone—that's all."

Then he fell to wondering where he could find a bed to sleep in in that squalid negro village, and how early he would have to be up in the morning to catch one of the fruit wagons back to Kingston.

"I've done all *I* could," he repeated.

The only sensible thing to do now was to turn about and go back to Morant Point, to get a little

much-needed rest before going back to Kingston and then to Panama.

But he did not turn back, and his thoughts were not of Panama. They wandered far away from that gorgeous tropic island and desolate sea-swept shore, not to the Isthmus, but to a little cottage away up the Mississippi River which he saw in his mind's eye. He pictured a mother and daughter, and he wondered how old the mother was and what the daughter's name was, and what they would say if they knew—

Then he looked out over the sea of tempests and hurricanes and wondered just how far it was to Haiti. He thought of the medal; it was just about the same size as the compass he was holding in his pocket.

The rocks were now thinning out and a white beach was discernible ahead, up which the waters rolled gracefully and receded. It was not as threatening, but quite as lonely and desolate except that a little distance ahead, a quarter of a mile, perhaps, a light flickered. One of the receding waves caught a piece of driftwood, carrying it down and away into the bosom of that black, moaning sea.

“It would be easy enough to launch a boat here,” said Harry; “she'd glide right in just like that piece of driftwood.”

As he wandered aimlessly along the beach, the whole western hemisphere seemed to contract and

he fancied that this woman and daughter were on one side of him and the son and brother and friend on the other side, and he stood between, here on this island, holding their happiness in his hand.

He looked out over the waste of ocean and fancied that the roar of the breakers at his feet was the sea laughing at his helplessness.

"Well," he repeated, drawing a long, discouraged breath, "I've done all *I* could."

Now two lights were visible, and as Harry neared them he saw a pair of bronze lanterns surmounting two granite gate-posts through which he could just see a brick mansion standing in a little private park, thick with tropical foliage. The gate stood hospitably open, and he wandered in and up through an avenue of cocoanut palms to the house, without any definite object, but attracted by the beautiful, fragrant grounds. They were thick with tropical fruits and flowers, neat gravel walks wound among the laden trees, and the air was heavy with the scent of blossoms, which mingled pleasantly with the salt air of the sea. It was a typical West Indian mansion, of which there are a number of fine specimens in this fair British island, occupied by the wealthy fruit growers. As Harry wandered out of the park again, a metal plate on one of the gate-posts caught his attention. On it was engraved the word, GRANTLEY.

"Mr. Wentworth's place," said he, surprised.

"Why, this must be Garden Harbor. If it were daytime," he thought, "I'd go in and see him. I'd like to see him again." As he strolled out toward the beach, looking fondly back at the beautiful home of the old gentleman he had liked so much, he thought of what Mr. Wentworth had said that evening in the smoking-room of the *Ancon*: "*It's a great thing to find a way. I sometimes think it's better to go on with a good purpose even if you know it will kill you. Whatever you do, don't give up.*"

The words had impressed Harry at the time, and now they seemed to burn him like fire, and he became strangely agitated. He breathed heavily, as he retraced his steps to the beach, and seemed ashamed or afraid, almost as if he might have robbed the place he was leaving.

As he turned about and looked again at the darkened windows, the splendid manor house seemed to fade away in the night and the incessant murmur of the surf hard by to die, and in their place he saw again the little cottage on the banks of a wide, marshy river. But presently the vision dissolved in the darkness and he heard only the roar of the breakers against the neighboring rocks.

"Have I— Have I—" he whispered.

Confused as he was, he did not see a little granite column which rose from the beach just before him, until he stumbled over it. Lighting a

match, he found upon it a metal plate with this inscription :

From this spot put to sea in the year 1504, Diego Mendez, a common sailor in the service of Christopher Columbus, who crossed the Caribbean Sea to the western extremity of Haiti (then San Domingo), a distance of one hundred and twenty miles, in a canoe, to bear the tidings of the Admiral's shipwreck and impending death by famine on this island.

This tablet is erected by Josiah E. Wentworth as a memorial to the faithfulness, hardihood, and splendid courage which prompted him to perform this act of heroism from the incentives of loyalty and friendship.

The wind, which had been growing brisker all that evening, rose into a gale; and the waves burst against the rocks with increasing fury as the night advanced. It was the petulant temper of the tropics, having its little fit out in the Windward Passage. The sea, rolling higher than its wont upon the beach at Garden Harbor, washed against the granite column erected to the memory of Diego Mendez, who had thrown down the gantlet to these same breakers four centuries before.

In the morning a colored maid at Grantley, going out to fasten up a vine which had blown down during the night, found beneath the door a note written in pencil upon the backs of several requisition slips of the Isthmian Canal Commission. It

was addressed to the master of the house, and he read it when he came down to breakfast:

DEAR MR. WENTWORTH:—

Maybe you won't remember me, but my name is Harry Arnold and you told me about Mendez on the *Ancon* nearly two years ago. To-night you've saved me from being a coward, but I hope you won't think I'm a thief. I came to Morant Point to find a fellow—a friend of mine—who was going to desert his regiment at Panama, and I guess he's gone to Haiti. So I'm going after him. I'm glad you said that about never giving up—though I guess maybe you don't remember it. You spoke about seeing a thing through even if you know it will kill you. And I was going back to Kingston and then to Panama because—I wasn't thinking so much about myself, but about my father and mother. Jack—my friend—has a mother and sister, so this is what I thought of just now before I write this on your porch—that my father is rich and his mother is poor, so he's needed more than I am; and besides I had started and I'm not going to turn back.

I was afraid if I waited till morning I might change my mind. I'm taking your row-boat and one of the lanterns from your gate-post, and some bananas and cocoanut, and here is sixty-three dollars, which is all I have with me, to pay for them

in case I shouldn't be able to return them. And then will you please—I mean if it turns out that way—will you please send this letter to my father at Oakwood, N. J., so he will know what became of me, and send a note to Mrs. Holden at Whitville, Mo., and tell her I tried to get her son back in time so they wouldn't arrest him.

I thank you very much, for you've helped me decide a hard thing to-night—and Mendez didn't have any help like that.

HARRY ARNOLD.

CHAPTER XXII

NAVASSA

ALL night long the wind blew in gusts and the sea continued turbulent and stormy. Occasionally a few drops of rain fell out of the black sky, ominous heralds of the tropical hurricane which was threatening.

That night the big liner, *Victoria-Liise*, plowed her way through wave and darkness in the Windward Passage, bearing her company of expectant tourists to see the great Canal. Sometime in the late, lonely watches of the night the oilskin-clad figure in her "crow's-nest" called down to the bridge that he saw a light far off the star-board bow, and the officer, sauntering to the extreme end of the bridge, scrutinized the dark waste of water, but could see no light. He acknowledged the look-out's report by repeating, "Light on the starboard bow, all right," and the mammoth iron hull, vibrating with the ceaseless throb of her great engines, was soon beyond the tiny light's radius. If there were a light at all, the officer thought, it must be a great distance away.

The figure which sat in the stern of a little row-

boat in the Windward Passage had seen the lights of the distant liner and had watched them disappear far to the south. On an oar lashed upright in the middle of this tiny craft was fastened the light which the practiced eye of the lookout had seen, and at the base of the light was securely tied a little compass. Thus both were above (or, with luck and skill and vigilance, might be kept above) the water which was shipped with every turn and maneuver of the little shell.

In the stern, with a baling-can held fast between his feet, sat the boy, his gaze fixed upon the mountainous waves which were rolling higher and ever higher, and more tumultuously, in upon him. It seemed as if his enemy were bringing reinforcements to the charge with each fresh advance.

It was the battle of David and Goliath.

A boy was fencing with the ocean and matching his skill against its awful power.

Carefully, measuring the effect of every movement, he wielded the only weapon that he had against the mighty foe that surrounded him—a paddle. But a paddle is quite as much a weapon as a sword, and requires much the same dexterity and skill. You can retreat with a paddle, or advance, or feint, or, if you think it expedient and care to take the chance, you can make a sudden, violent assault. You can throw your bow up with a paddle; you can drag it as a rudder; you can turn it into a whizzing

propeller; you can sometimes mount the black fortifications of the wildest sea and run down into the watery entrenchments on the other side. Then you must bale quickly and be ready for the next advance. If you mount diagonally you will have more baling to do. Don't ever run down diagonally, nor cross the summit diagonally. Stand, if you think a sudden shifting of your weight will become necessary, but remember that the skill of shooting rapids is not the same as that required for a skirmish with a hurricane. Always keep your bow up; it is like keeping your troops concealed. The less length there is under water, the more difficult it is for your enemy to throw you around. Bale as fast and as often as you get a chance; it is like carrying your wounded from the field. Watch ceaselessly, but don't look too far ahead, and don't worry about the enemy's rear-guard. Calculate carefully, and carry out your calculations nicely. Your paddle belongs off your left side when its use is not imminent somewhere else.

Of course, it was an unequal struggle; the odds were against him. But remember, the ocean has no brains, and Harry had that one advantage over his foe.

The boy whose skill was matched against the wrathful power of the Caribbean Sea that night was a scout, and he knew the use of the paddle. If he won at all it must be by science, he knew that.

And calm, alert, with all his mind concentrated upon the struggle, thinking quickly, and maneuvering with amazing skill to meet each new tactic of his enemy, watching eagerly as a swordsman watches, a stroke now to the right, now to the left, now a quick, decisive twirl this way or that, just in the nick of time; so, by dint of ceaseless watching and planning, thinking out each move and counteracting the moves of his adversary with lightning agility and matchless cunning, Harry performed the miracle of keeping above those black, tempestuous mountains which tossed him on their crests and plunged him low in their abysmal cañons.

Sometimes he was almost swamped, and once he was out of the boat entirely, regaining it with difficulty. The direction of the swell was generally such that he could keep his bow due east, but how far he might have been carried north or south he could not tell. He feared he might be borne back to the Jamaica coast and dashed against its rocks. But when dawn came he found that he was out of sight of land.

There is one good thing about the Caribbean Sea: its wrathful fits are soon over, and it has a way of calming down all in a minute, as if to say, "Let bygones be bygones."

He was glad enough to do that. All through that wild, awful night he had been threatened and bullied, but he had kept a level head, and here he was

at dawn, limp, panting, trembling from weakness and exhaustion, but victorious for the time at least.

The sea was now almost as smooth as glass and, reclining in the stern of his gallant little shell, he prepared to recuperate his strength with a little food and rest. He learned then the homely value of the cocoanut and the grateful nutriment of the humble banana. With his knife he bored a little hole in the cocoanut's hairy shell and sucked out the delicious, nourishing milk. Then he broke the nut and ate its strengthening meat. There is no food like the cocoanut, if you pick it fresh in its sultry, tropic home. It is food and drink both. Not that I have anything to say against a banana, or a dozen of them, provided you are where they grow. But no one knows what a banana is unless he has lived in the Torrid Zone.

As the morning advanced, the flying fish began to play about the little boat, gliding across it, and sometimes mistaking the span and tumbling in. Later a school of porpoises accompanied him and almost capsized him in their playful maneuvers. After a while he propped himself up and began to paddle in earnest. He paddled steadily for several hours. At night he decided to have bananas and cocoanut for supper so as to vary the bill-of-fare, since he had had cocoanut and bananas in the morning. Taking advantage of the amiable mood of the sea, he had even dozed a little through the

day, enjoying in his exhaustion a kind of half sleep in which he retained enough of consciousness to keep his boat headed toward the east.

With sunset came a fitful breeze which grew stronger as the night fell, and made him apprehensive. The calm was not indeed to continue, and the sea was rough with a kind of smoldering anger, all night.

"We seem to be getting on the outs again, old Nep," said Harry, as he wet his hands in the brine and grasped his paddle for the long night's vigil.

But old Neptune, though he complained in an undertone and beat about all night, did not lash himself into another fury.

All night long the boy paddled steadily, wetting and massaging his left wrist occasionally, for it ached cruelly from the abrupt little twirl of it which skillful paddling makes necessary. And all night long he watched his compass in the glare of the lantern light.

In the morning a bright idea struck him. "I'll have bananas and cream for breakfast," he said.

So he broke a cocoanut in half and cut up a banana in the rich milk which lay in one-half of the shell.

He had a wistful hope of seeing land that day, or at least some sign of life; a passing ship would have been better than nothing. Moreover, he was troubled with the fear that he might have been

borne south of the Haitian coast, in which case he would miss it and be carried out among the Lesser Antilles or the Windward Group, or, escaping these, out upon the bosom of the broad Atlantic.

Still another day passed and another night, and he was upon the verge of collapse from exhaustion and insufficient sleep, and still there was no sign of land. His arms were so stiff that he used his paddle right and left at short intervals in the hope of relief. They had been sorely burned and inflamed too, by the tropic sun.

He was no longer in the cheerful mood which the encouragement of his first triumph and the balmy weather of the next day had given him. He was half sick with paddling and almost desperate from the fear that all this work and risk and suffering should still prove futile, and he should find no haven to the east, but some far-off desert island in that scattering company which inscribes its semicircular expanse far out beyond the outermost member of the West Indies. He began to doubt whether he might even find such hapless refuge as that, and in his weak and panic state began almost to hope that the sea would swallow him up and Mrs. Holden and her daughter learn that only death had caused his failure. "I don't want to live and fail," he said.

At the end of the fourth day he felt sure that he was miles out of his course, headed for the Wind-

ward, or Leeward, Group, or for Europe—he knew not where, except that he was making eastward. He was convinced that Haiti was far behind him. And he was truly desperately ill. His head throbbed with every stroke of his paddle, and his work was even more handicapped by his hopelessness, for he felt that each stroke bore him farther from his destination.

Still he paddled on, panting, his hands trembling, his head swimming and burning with fever.

“I—I—I’ve—done all—I—I could,” he gasped.

Yes, Harry, you have done all you could this time, surely. But see, what is that, away off straight ahead of you? It looks like a cloud. Don’t you remember, that is how San Salvador looked to Columbus, just a cloud on the horizon? But see how it slopes down on either side. That is not a cloud. Sit up, Harry, gather your strength, make this one final effort; paddle just two, three hours more, then see how that looks.

With renewed strength he sat up and paddled for three hours, straight eastward. Again and again he brushed the straggling lock of hair back from his throbbing forehead. His flushed, hot face was eager, his dry lips trembled, the fever which stared in his eyes gave them a wild, desperate look.

But he paddled—how he paddled!

Now look at it, Harry; you could see it better but for the twilight. But there is Haiti, sure enough.

“And Jack *will* come marching home again,” he thought, “*he will, he will*. We’ll get the steamer at Port au Prince, and—”

It was almost dark when he drew his boat up on a wild, bleak shore. There was no sign of life, no house, no path, no tree; nothing but a beach and a hill. Painfully he mounted the hill to see, if might be, how he could make his way to the nearest settlement. But he saw no settlement, only the same waste of ocean beyond.

Poor boy! That’s right, throw yourself down upon the grass and have it out, and let the kind delirium of fever take you away from this cruel reality.

For Harry was on a little, lonely, treeless desert island, with none but the shrieking seabirds to keep him company.

CHAPTER XXIII

A STRANGE CALLER

"HE's done every single thing in the Scout Manual—he's got the gold cross, and the signaler's badge, and the stalker's badge, and the marksman's badge—and—and he's so strong that he can't catch any kind of sickness and—"

"Not much of a catcher, is he?"

"What! He caught two liners and three flies—"

"He can't even catch the grippe."

"And besides that (you think you're funny, don't you!), and besides that, he can bend his fingers back, like that, till they touch his wrist; and another thing, even his enemies would admit it, he—"

"He's got lots of enemies, has he?"

"He's hasn't got any!"

"What are they admitting, then?"

"You think you're smart, don't you! He—what was I going to say? Oh, he's stronger than any fellow his age in this city—"

"What city?"

"This—well, the last city we passed. He can throw a ball—he can throw a ten thousand—a ten-pound weight—he can throw—"

"He can throw a good bluff."

The young gentleman who offered this last suggestion received a shove which almost sent him sprawling into the Mississippi River.

The *Scout* had been safely dislodged from Coleman's Tree, and had proceeded on her way downstream, the boys bearing many messages from motherly Mrs. Holden and her daughter, which they promised to deliver to the absent soldier if they should run across him on the Isthmus. The three of them were now sitting in their favorite perch, along the stern end of the hunting-cabin of the good ship (or the bad ship) *Scout*, with their legs dangling into the cockpit, while Mr. Howell sat in his steamer chair which almost filled the cockpit, reading a back number of that exciting paper, the *Engineering News*. He was reading about lateral strains and shock absorption and excessive pressure, and he now looked up over the top of his spectacles to see whether there was too much friction among the trio, and whether it might possibly lead to an explosion. He was always watchful lest the delight which his sons took in jollyng Gordon might result in bad feeling; but it never did, for though Gordon often grew very vehement and excited, he seldom became really angry, though the subject of Harry Arnold was one on which he was extremely touchy. For Harry was his idol.

"Well," said Joe Howell, mischievously, "I'm from Missouri, you'll have to *show* me."

"I'll show you all right when we get to Panama."

"If we ever do," observed Will.

That was a wise provision, for the *Scout's* demeanor in her progress down the great river had been anything but worthy of her name. For one thing, she leaked incessantly, and some one was nearly always working the pump. Sometimes she went sideways, sometimes frontways. Sometimes the engine worked, and then again, sometimes it didn't. It must have been a constitutional disorder, for the motor declined positively to reveal any specific trouble. Mr. Howell, who had long since lost the last vestige of respect for the boat, pronounced it a case of "pure cussedness."

They had at last, in their rambling, interrupted progress of alternate drifting, camping, and spurts of running under power, reached the lower stretch of river, where the first hint of the sea was perceptible in the pungent odor of salt marsh. The river now was wide and rough, and fewer of the shantyboat people and "rafters," those river tramps who had been so plentiful above Vicksburg, were to be seen. They had bought most of their provisions from these wandering merchants, and now they had been obliged to go ashore at Baton Rouge for supplies. This quaint old town was soon left in the distance, its picturesque capitol building standing like a medieval castle and fading gradually as the

Scout, in one of her amiable moods, chugged merrily southward.

Now great sugar plantations bordered both sides of the widening river, extending far back to the borders of the forest. Occasionally, some stately mansion or fine old manor-house could be seen among the magnolia trees which were plentiful along the shores. Now and then, a group of lively pickaninnies, playing along the levees, would salute them with missiles, or some Southern mammy would wave a red bandanna as they chugged by. They were all expectancy now and anxious to reach the city which would usher them out of the winding river into the gulf.

"Boys," said Mr. Howell, "I want you to listen to me. If the *Scout* continues to behave, which she probably won't, we'll be in New Orleans before night. I know you're anxious to get to the Isthmus and so am I, but discretion is the better part of valor; isn't that so?"

"Sure it is," said Joe.

"Same here," said Will.

"I'll have the same," said Gordon.

"Well, then," said Mr. Howell, laughing, "before we tackle the Gulf I'm going to have this old boat thoroughly overhauled, and that may keep us here a week. I know you boys are impatient, but it's well to have one old fogey along with old-

fashioned ideas about safety, isn't it? We all want to get home alive, don't we?"

"Good guess," said Gordon.

"Well, then, I want you to just settle down and have a good time in the city and don't fret about getting away. We'll get away just the very minute we can get this old scow in condition to take us down to Colon. She's been acting like a great, big, overgrown baby."

"Naughty, naughty," said Will, slapping her side, "to behave so!"

"But she'll brace up and be all right yet," said his father. "I suspect that first cylinder's all clogged up with carbon. Anyway, I'm going to have it taken apart, and have the planking reinforced with extra ribs, to draw up that plank, and I'm going to have her caulked and painted. And you boys can look around for a suitable boat for a tender. With all respect to you, Gordon, I don't mean she shall have any more adventures."

But it was not for Mr. Howell to say what her future history or her fate should be. Her adventures, alas, were not over.

They reached New Orleans that afternoon, and the very first thing Mr. Howell did was to inquire for some competent man to overhaul the *Scout's* engine and for some one who could draw up her sprung planking, and caulk and paint her. Then, turning their prow up the river again, they made a

landing at a little one-horse shipyard, or marine carpenter shop, a mile or two above the city. Here they bargained for the work, receiving the cheering intelligence that it could be finished within a week. And so, assured that they might continue their voyage after that brief time, they made their way overland to the city, and to one of its best hotels for such a square meal, as Mr. Howell said, as they had not enjoyed since they left the hospitable roof of Mrs. Holden.

Next morning the boys started out sight-seeing, and Mr. Howell settled himself in a comfortable armchair in the hotel lobby to read his *Engineering News*. Presently a call-boy informed him that a gentleman was asking for him at the desk. Following the boy, he found a stout, elderly man with spectacles leaning against the counter, who scrutinized him with two little beady black eyes.

"Good-morning," said Mr. Howell, surprised; "you wish to see me, sir?"

"Meester Howell? Ah, yess," jerked out the stranger. "I would much weesh to haf' a word weeth you."

CHAPTER XXIV

“TO HIM THAT OVERCOMETH—”

AT dawn Harry Arnold dragged himself to his feet after a night of pain and fever, and periods of troubled sleep. He knew that he must have been delirious, for he had seen the medal and Mr. Barney and Carleton Conne. Gordon had been with him, and they had gone off on a treasure hunt together, far in the Panamanian jungle. And through all these visions of his burning, throbbing head, there had been the steady motion of paddling, up and down over waves, up and down, till his wrist ached from the little twirling motion that he knew so well.

When he rose he knew that he was very sick, and with the knowledge came despair. He knew that he was not able to venture out again upon that waste of sea; and even if he were able, he asked himself, where should he go, in which direction should he point his prow? He did not even know whether Jamaica was due west. And if he knew it was, he would not, if he could, go there.

He had never before actually failed. He had not always been unqualifiedly successful in his ventures, but he had never utterly failed. Now, he told him-

self, he had utterly failed; and it seemed proper that he should not survive his failure. He had been willing, ready, to go down in those black waves in his effort to save Jack, but to die of fever on a lonely, desert island, that was an alternative he had not thought of.

Yet that was the fate that stared him in the face, as he dragged himself down to the shore and grimly prepared for himself such accommodation as might enable him to die with some degree of comfort. With the strength born of despair, he drew the boat up and inverting it rested one end against a rocky precipice, and lay down beneath this shed, using his two cushions as a pillow. Often at home he had made a roof of his canoe in this way. The last time had been when Marjorie Danforth and he had been caught in a heavy shower up the river. That was his last wistful thought as he lay down.

How long he lay there he did not know. Night came, and day and night again, and then there came a time when he drank a little milk from a cocoanut. Finally, he rose, feeling strangely weak and giddy and uncertain on his feet, and dragged himself to the top of the hill to see if there were any sign of a vessel.

There was none. But straight eastward, a dozen miles or more away, he thought, there loomed up a mountainous stretch of shore, and as he gazed at it there rushed to his mind the recollection that

when he had looked from the rail of the *Ancon* to see the distant shore of Haiti, he had consulted the map in the steamship folder and had noticed, close under the Haitian shore, a tiny island, the island of Navassa. Could this be Navassa, and not some distant island far out of his course? Was that in truth the long, thin finger of the Haitian peninsula reaching toward him? Had he been all this time under its very shadow, its welcoming mountains veiled from him only by the darkness and by his own fever?

In any event, it was land, and ill though he still was, he would go there. "It will be as good a place to die as this," he cynically told himself. He did not think now that there was any possible chance of finding Jack; that hope had vanished in his late disappointment and his present illness, and he was discouraged. But he would still do all he could.

So, half conscious at times, and nearly dropping with fatigue, he set forth in his little boat for that neighboring shore. The Caribbean was smooth, and he lay in the stern weakly manipulating his paddle. Every stroke made his head throb, and the fervor of the tropic sun was intolerable upon his hot, dry forehead. With his trembling hand he bathed his parched lips, but the warm salt water only nauseated him. He would have given his life for a fresh, cooling draught.

Wind and tide were in his favor, and late that

day he drew his boat up on a wide beach beyond which the rocks lay in great ugly masses, and beyond these the mountains. It was a bleak, lonely, uninhabited shore, a scene of desolation.

Staggering along the beach, he looked about for some sign of human life. His late exertion had imparted a tremulousness to his frame, and he was so weak and giddy as he walked along that he came near to falling more than once. Then, suddenly, he whirled and dropped to the ground.

But it was not the invalid that fell; it was the scout that kneeled.

For there at his feet was a footprint, which I should have supposed might have been his own, though he seemed to think otherwise. For he studied it closely, touching it here and there, as if it were some delicate, costly fabric. With a quick motion of annoyance, he brushed that falling lock back from his forehead; and soothing his throbbing head with his palm, he bent low over his discovery.

"It's—it's the kind they use for target practice in the three-hundred-yard dash; there's the heel-plate as clean as day—unless," he added, shaking his head dubiously, "unless the soldiers in Haiti wear that kind."

It's little I know, Harry, about the kind of shoes our soldiers wear in target practice, or about three-hundred-yard dashes or heel-plates; but if it's any consolation to you I can tell you that the soldiers

in Haiti wear no shoes at all; if one of them saw a pair of shoes, he would probably die of fright.

If there is one place more than another in the world where the fugitive from justice is safe, that place is the island on whose western extremity Harry had landed. He was, in fact, upon the territory of the Black Republic, and his working capital was just no more than a good American footprint. He was at the base of the mountains among whose wild, untraversed fastnesses the cannibal and the bloody Voodoo priest still hold their unmolested sway. The long, thin, rugged peninsula which stretches its one hundred and fifty miles westward is as wild and primitive to-day as when Diego Mendez pushed his solitary way through its pestilent, tangled jungle and its rocky mountain passes.

Just in the elbow, where it joins the island proper, is the city of Port au Prince, the capital of the Black Republic, a filthy, dilapidated place where steamers occasionally put in when there is no plague or yellow fever, and no revolution going on. If it were not for this long, narrow peninsula, Jamaica would be nearly three hundred, instead of one hundred and twenty-five, miles from Haiti.

Far out on the end, or very near the end, of this wild region is a little settlement called Jeremie, which has proved a very useful place, for when a



"HE STUDIED IT CLOSELY, TOUCHING IT HERE AND THERE."

H. S. K. '13

Haitian rebel who has been unsuccessful, or a president who has stolen the funds from the national treasury, finds it inadvisable to take ship in Port au Prince, he can travel to the end of the peninsula and then disappear. Where he goes is never known. Capot sees to that.

Capot is about all there is to Jeremie. Capot will conceal you, transport you, change your name for you,—and betray you if he thinks it worth his while. If Haiti has a treaty with another nation to return criminals and fugitives, this is the way she does it. She has them pay a good sum, then turns them over to Capot, and reports that she cannot find them. Sometimes people die on Capot's hands. That is usually when their money is gone. Capot's ways are dark, like his color.

It was in the direction of this foul place that the footprint, and others half discernible, led Harry. At least, they led him to a little eminence from which he could see the smoke of the settlement, as it curled up against the craggy background of the mountains. He was very weak and dizzy, but he plodded on, for if his illness had sapped his wonted strength, it had at least increased, if that were possible, his dogged resolution. He would go on till he came to the end. So, like one in a trance, he pressed his way through a maze of underbrush, and through places where each tree seemed like half a dozen trees and all about to fall upon him,

until he was within half a mile of the little cluster of houses, and he noticed that the buildings were on piles and set high up from the ground, like houses walking on stilts.

Now he came to a grove of palm trees and fancied that he heard a sound close at hand. There was a figure cutting through the place—a figure carrying a gun and some game. Harry reeled against a tree and clutched it to hold himself up. He jerked his head back and with a tremulous, hollow, ghastly laugh, tossed the falling lock from his forehead.

“Just—just—the one—I—wanted to—see,” he gasped; “funny—how you—”

The approaching figure dropped the gun and rushing forward, caught the reeling boy in his arms.

“Those houses—they’re all—sliding—down—Jack. I’ve done—all—I cou—”

The throbbing, frenzied, burning head was drawn down so that it rested on one of the broad, straight shoulders that Uncle Sam knows how to make.

“You—you—understand—don’t you?” came in a faint, half-conscious whisper.

The limp form was lowered gently to the earth, the head pillowed upon the other’s forearm. From a hunter’s flask a shower of cool spring water from those mountain fastnesses was thrown over

the flushed face, and a hand moved, ever so gently, against the burning temples.

"Yes, I understand."

"I don't—want—any piece of—of—junk—I've—done all I—"

"Yes, I know; it's my turn now."

It was many days later when two haggard figures, one pitiably gaunt, pushed aside for the last time the tangled vegetation in their path, and emerged from the dim intricacies of the mountain jungle into the little village of Leogane at the eastern end of the Haitian peninsula, and gazed across a stretch of marshy lowland at the most inhospitable city in the world—for a white man.

"There she is, at last," panted Harry.

"There she is," echoed Jack.

"You can say what you please about her, old man, but she looks good to me."

"Be it ever so rotten,
There's no place like Port au Prince,"

hummed Jack. "Are you tired?"

"N-no."

"Sit down on that rock."

"I think that's the smoke of the steamer starting for the Isthmus," said Harry. He liked to tease Jack this way.

"Well, you've another think, my fraptious boy,"

said Jack. "She starts to-morrow at 10 A.M., and not one minute before."

"Have you kept track of the days?"

"I've kept track of the days, never fear."

"When I was sick?"

"You're sick now, you old—"

"No, I'm not; just give me that little sea voyage that's coming to me and I'll throw you across Culebra Cut yet!"

"Fancy that!" said Jack, indulgently. Then, seeing the other's thoughtful look, he added seriously, "What's the matter, old man?"

"Nothing. I was just thinking."

"About what? The steamer? I've kept tabs on the days, old man; don't let that trouble you. See here now, we were three days and two nights in the cave," he counted them on his fingers, "and two days in the deserted shack—there's five days; then we were five days in the jungle before we came to the swamp—don't you remember when I shot the armadillo? That was the first time you ate any meat; then—"

Harry shook his head languidly. "No, I don't remember; but as long as you know we're in time, it's all right."

"What are you worrying about, then? Here, rest against this rock and lay your head back—like that. Raise your neck a little so I can put this coat under; there, that better?"

"Yes."

"Now, what's troubling you? Thinking about the—"

"No, I'm not, and I told you never to mention that again. I don't want it. I was just wondering how safe it is for a motor-boat like that to cross the Gulf and the Caribbean."

Jack smiled. "You're looking forward to seeing your friend, aren't you, old man?"

"Yes, I am," said Harry, weakly. "I forgot all about his letter those first few days, but after I found you and when I began to get better, I remembered it and then I began to look forward, and then I got to worrying some. You see," he added, "I know what the Caribbean is."

"Yes," said Jack, softly, "you certainly do."

He looked so sober that Harry was sorry he had mentioned the Caribbean. There was a few minutes' silence, and when Jack spoke again his voice was low and very earnest.

"Do you know, Harry, I've got a crazy kind of notion that I guess you won't understand. Does it tire you to hear me talk?"

Harry shook his head.

"Did you ever have an idea that didn't seem to have any sense when you told it? Do you think a fellow might cross the Windward Passage without ever going to sea? I mean if he has a thing to decide and thinks and thinks about it and wants to do

one thing and knows he ought to do the other, and wrestles and fights with himself—it's all just inside of his head, I know—but isn't it a kind of Windward Passage that he has to cross—or that he tries to cross? He may go down like I did, or would have if I hadn't been rescued. That's a freakish kind of an idea, isn't it?" he added, half ashamed.

"I guess most everybody has to cross some kind of a Windward Passage sometime in his life," said Harry. "I understand."

"But you crossed the real one—and there wasn't any one to rescue you."

"There was another one I crossed," said Harry, "and that was in Culebra Cut, in the middle of the night, and that was just as much of a fight and tussle—I guess."

"But you crossed it," said Jack, proudly.

"I had the big Cut—Culebra Cut—to help me."

Jack looked puzzled. Perhaps he thought his friend's mind was wandering a little again. "Do you feel able to go on?" he said gently. "You're going to sleep in a bed to-night if I have to oust the President from his palace."

The next morning, having rested and bathed, as well as any one may rest or bathe in the capital of Haiti, they breakfasted on the first regular meal they had had for many weary days of tramping and camping, during which Jack had been guide and nurse and housekeeper. If the steamer made

Colon in four days (and it usually took her only three), Jack would be in barracks on the morning that his furlough expired. Was it any wonder he was elated? And though Harry did not know what sort of greeting awaited him at Panama, still he would see Gordon there; there would be that, anyway.

The wharf was but a little distance from the dilapidated hotel where they had stayed, and Harry, refreshed by an uninterrupted night's sleep, wandered along the quays with Jack, seeing what little there was to see of the wretched place before going aboard the *Präsident*. Jack, watchful and solicitous, was continually urging him to go aboard the ship, where he might enjoy that blessed luxury of the convalescent, a steamer chair.

"All right," said Harry, at length, "just wait till we see what that crowd is about and I'll go with you, Dr. Holden."

"Oh, never mind the crowd."

"I think it's a new revolution starting," urged Harry. "We can get some points."

"We'll get our pockets picked," said Jack, unwillingly following him down to the end of the rickety pier.

Here was a little crowd of negroes talking excitedly in French and pointing into the water. The boys went to the edge and looked down. There was the wreck of a sizable motor-boat rolling logily amid

a mass of weeds and driftwood, and refuse from the city. Her cabin was entirely gone, and her waterlogged hull was almost at the water-line. A negro who had come alongside her in a punt to investigate, pulled a pair of shoes out of her cockpit with a boathook.

"Come," said Jack, "it's only a wreck drifted in."

But Harry stood, staring into the water, trembling visibly. He questioned those about and gleaned from their surly answers that the boat must have been wrecked in the high wind of a night or two previous and her entire crew had evidently perished, as she had drifted in this morning with no sign of life on board.

The negro in the punt stepped upon the stern piece, and it sank so that the bow appeared just enough above the water to reveal the gold lettering on its edge.

"Jack," said Harry, shaking like a leaf, "Jack, look—"

"What's the matter, old man?" said Jack, catching the swaying form.

"Look—look—" It was all Harry could say. Jack looked and saw the words *Scout, St. Louis, Mo.* upon the bow of the boat.

The treacherous Caribbean had sent them this ghastly memento of her triumph to show that those who brave her fury are not always allowed to be victorious.

CHAPTER XXV

JACK FINDS A WAY

THE big Tivoli Hotel was resplendent with bunting. The stars and stripes and the flag of the Panama Republic hung side by side above the spacious entrance, and the cosy little bungalows which clustered about Uncle Sam's great hostelry on the slopes of Ancon Hill made each its contribution to the gala scene in tasteful arrays of festoon and streamer.

From the rear verandas of the big hotel (so long the scene of dance and revel for Uncle Sam's great working force) could be seen a score of vessels riding at anchor in the slow roll of the Pacific. Even the sprawling, indolent Spiggoty coach drivers had bedecked their shabby equipages in cheap, but ostentatious, finery in honor of the dress rehearsal.

For, as sure as you live, the "Old Man" was going to "put a vessel through." Some day a year or two hence these decorations, or others more pretentious, would grace another and still more festive scene, the formal opening of the great canal. But that would be for the world at large.

This was different; just a family party, and a few intimate friends of the family. A celebration by the people, of the people, and for the people,—the people who had done the job, who had stood by the “Old Man,” and who were going to honor him now. If there was one thing he hated, it was being honored, but he could not always have his own way.

The “Old Man’s” private inspection car had been decorated. His neighbors, the Culebra boys, had attended to that. The Marine Band from Bas Obispo was going to serenade him that night. If he tried to escape through the back door, the Tenth Infantry Band from Camp Otis would be there to head him off. That was Tom Bonney’s idea. The boys over in the Surveyors’ Quarters in Empire were going to try to get his green sunshade, that battered war-horse that he loved so well, and fill it with tropical flowers. When he opened it—!

The Commissary boys had another scheme (they were always a lively lot). They were going to have the steamer *Ancon’s* launch, literally covered with palm leaves, waiting at Pier 11, right behind the Cristobal Y. M. C. A., and take the Colonel (literally *take him*, mind you) from his inspection car and carry him across the harbor and on to the proud vessel which was to make the momentous trip.

And yet you hear about Colonel Goethals’ being the “boss.” The plain fact is that he was to have

nothing whatever to say. He was in the hands of the boys, for one day at least. The "Cut men" had something up their sleeves, and the "locks men" and "spillway men" were just as bad. The "sanitary men" were worse. They had a great plan, but oh, weren't they close-mouthed about it? The McClintic-Marshall boys,¹ who simply owned Gatun (or thought they did), had a high-handed enterprise. They were going to meet the Colonel on the Pacific side, away over halfway to Tobago Island, in one of the tugs of the Pacific Mail Steamship line, and bring him back to the Tivoli. How were they going to get the tug? Oh, there were ways. Trust the McClintic-Marshall boys for that.

In a word, there were going to be "some doings" in the big happy family.

A little after dark on the evening prior to the affair, the inter-island steamer *Präsident* poked her way in between the breakwaters of Colon Harbor, and cast her anchor at a little distance from the vessel which was to play the leading rôle in the next day's program.

"What are all the electric lights on the Washington² for?" asked a young man who stood at the rail.

¹Employees of McClintic-Marshall Construction Co., but working under supervision of the Canal Commission.

²The government's hotel on Colon Beach.

"The Custom House man says they're going to put a vessel through to-morrow," said his companion. "He just came aboard. He's talking with the purser now."

"Going to put a vessel through?" the other repeated listlessly.

"Yes, that vessel over there."

"When do we go ashore?"

"In the morning, I suppose. Don't you want to turn in early, old man, and get a good night's rest?"

"I can't sleep," said the other. "Maybe the doctors won't let me go ashore," he added wistfully.

"Of course they will. They don't quarantine people because they happen to be a little weak."

"Are you sure to-morrow morning's time enough for you to report?"

"Don't worry about me; I've got till day after to-morrow."

"You'd better report in the morning."

"And desert my patient? Nit, not."

Harry looked at him gratefully, but could not force a smile to his lips.

"What's that over there, Jack, that light?" he asked dully, after a few minutes.

"That? Oh, that's a motor-boat, I guess. It's making for that other ship—that white one. Don't you know, we passed close by her coming in? I think it's a yacht."

Harry shuddered. "I can't bear to hear the word motor-boat," he said in a low voice. "It just seems to—"

"I know, old man, don't think of that now; it's like another Windward Passage—you've been through it. Brace up, don't give way now; you've got—what's-his-name—Mr. Barney, left."

"I don't know whether I have or not," Harry said dubiously. "I don't even know that I belong on the Canal any longer. And nobody could ever take Gordon's place to me, anyway."

"There are all your friends—your other friends home in Oakwood."

"There's one who'll always be my friend, I'm sure," said Harry, "and that's Mr. Conne—if I can ever find him. Oh," he added, "wasn't he amused at Gordon!"

Jack said nothing, only tried to urge him from the rail and from these sad thoughts.

"Jack," said Harry, wistfully, "wouldn't it be fine to go through the Canal? They're lucky, the people who'll be on that ship. If I could just go through it once, right through the Cut where I worked, then I'd be glad to go home. My mother and father will be home by that time."

"I guess no one but the Old Man and a few of his friends will go through."

"They're lucky," Harry answered.

When he had gone to bed, Jack returned to the

deck and on his face was a look of determination unusual to him. He went to the purser's office, and that busy officer glanced up from his freight list frowningly.

"Could I go ashore?" asked Jack.

"Certainly not—not till the Custom House men and the immigration officers and the doctors get through with us."

"When will that be?"

"Seven A.M."

Jack went out on deck, and the resolved look had tightened about his lips.

"I suppose that ship over there is the only one that's going through?" he asked of the surgeon whom he met.

"The Customs man who was aboard said he thought that yacht there was going through after her," replied the surgeon. "She's owned by some friend of the Colonel's, I believe. You hear all kinds of things; guess there's a lot of excitement ashore."

"That ship with the two lights?" asked Jack.
"That's a yacht, is it?"

The surgeon turned to talk with some one else, and Jack wandered back to the narrow passage behind the wheel-house. For a minute he gazed across the harbor at the two lights and the white hull faintly outlined beneath them. Then he took off his shoes, his cap, his coat, and laid them in an

orderly pile at his feet. Then, placing both hands upon the rail, he vaulted over into the darkness and struck out for the white hull. He had not grown up on the banks of the Mississippi River for nothing, and he knew how to swim.

When he reached the white hull, he saw a little motor-launch rocking alongside the rope ladder. He clambered up the side of the launch, then to the ladder, then to the deck. Throwing back his head with a fine, soldierly air, he strode without ceremony into a beautiful electric-lighted cabin. An elderly gentleman with a bald head sat in a chair reading. He looked up in astonishment at the drenched figure which stood before him.

"Excuse me, sir," said Jack, "I just swam over from the Haitian steamer and came aboard. Are you the owner of this ship?"

His manner was not especially deferential. He bore himself independently, as if he were doing and asking no more than his right. Yet his form was so straight, his bearing so open and soldierly, despite his dripping garments, that the man was not displeased.

"I am; why did you come aboard that way?"

"Because I heard you were going through the Canal to-morrow. Is that so?"

"We expect to."

"Well," said Jack, going straight to the point, "I went to Haiti—I was going to desert my regi-

ment here in Panama; and a friend of mine who was working on the Canal gave up his chance of winning a canal medal, which he'd set his heart on, and went all the way to Haiti after me. He canoed across the Windward Passage and came near dying, just to bring me to my senses, and thanks to him I'm going to be in review Friday morning. That's what you call a good turn, isn't it?"

"You should be very grateful to him," said the man, more and more puzzled.

"I'm just so grateful to him," said Jack, "that when he said he wished he could go through the Canal, I made up my mind he'd have his wish if there's any kindness and decency among the ship's people in this harbor."

"I hope we have our share of kindness and decency here," said the man, smiling. "What is your friend's name?"

But Jack had no chance to answer, for the cabin door opened and three boys entered.

"No use," said one of them. "The fellow that hates a quitter has quit."

"No trace of him?" the man asked soberly.

"No, they all say the same thing. He just disappeared without any notice. Didn't tell any one he was going, and nobody has heard a word of him since. They don't know what to make of it."

"Guess he's on the way home," said another of

the three. "Uncle Sam's trusty has flown the coop, Pop."

The gentleman looked sympathetically at the third boy, who had not spoken. He was smaller than the others, a little fellow with a round, brown face, whose lip trembled visibly. He reached down and hitched up his stocking. The misery written on his face and in his demeanor was pitiful.

"Come here, my boy," said the gentleman, softly. "I didn't think another day's hunting would do any good, but I consented for your sake. Don't feel badly. Boys, you mustn't make fun of him any more. If your friend has gone home, he probably had some good reason. Did you inquire at Ancon Hospital?"

"Yes, everywhere," said one of the larger boys.

"You fellows—you can give it up if you like," the younger boy said with difficulty, "but—I won't—I *never* will. He's either here or he's dead. He's *not* a quitter. He—he—"

"Hush, my boy," comforted the gentleman. Then, turning to Jack, who had stood silently by, he said, "Here is a young man who has come to ask us to do him a good turn, and as you are the good turn specialist of our party, suppose you listen to his story. This boy here," he added, as the trio turned to Jack, whom they had scarcely noticed, "believes that a good turn is a good business investment and always bears fruit. So if we don't

do what you ask from kindness and decency we might do it as a speculation and see what comes of it; eh, Gordon?"

Jack started at the sound of the name.

"This young man, boys," went on the gentleman, "has a friend worthy to be called a friend. He was telling me about him when you came in. A friend who gave up his prospect of getting one of those precious medals you were telling me about, to go to Haiti and bring back a soldier who had foolishly thought of deserting his regiment stationed here at Panama. So he wants this friend to go through the Canal with us to-morrow. What do you say, boys? Come, Gordon, cheer up! Shall we do this good turn? I think, my boy," he said, turning to Jack, "that we will invest in this good turn. Suppose you tell your friend—er, what did you say his name is?"

"His name," said Jack, looking straight at Gordon, "is Harry Arnold; may I ask yours?"

"What? Where is he?" shrieked Gordon, rushing at him as if he thought Jack might have Harry concealed somewhere about his dripping person.

"He's over there on the *Präsident*," said Jack, "and if you're Gordon Lord, he thinks you're dead because just before we left Haiti we saw a wreck of a motor-boat that had washed in after a storm, and it had *Scout, St. Louis, Mo.* on it. They told us all her people had been drowned."

Explanations flew thick and fast, and everybody talked at once. I cannot tell you who was the happier, Gordon or Jack Holden. But I can tell you who talked the most and who laid all the deep plans for the morrow—and that was Gordon. And I can tell you who looked very sheepish (though they were pleased enough, too), and that was the famous Howell brothers, specialists in jollying—address, St. Louis, Mo.

It appeared from Gordon's disjointed account that Mr. Howell had purchased this handsome steam yacht in New Orleans, after selling the *Scout* to a man who seemed very anxious to buy her. The matter had been seriously discussed, and Gordon prided himself greatly on having recommended the whole transaction, though they were all shocked to learn of the fate of the *Scout*.

It was arranged that Jack should say nothing whatever to Harry about this visit, but should contrive to bring him aboard early the next morning. One of Mr. Howell's crew rowed him back as near to the *Präsident* as was safe (for it was contrary to rules for any one to hold communication with a vessel not yet inspected), and he swam the rest of the way and got aboard without being observed.

But Mr. Howell had still a surprise up his sleeve. "Boys," he said, wiping his spectacles with great care, and then wiping his shiny bald head with the same care, as if he could see through that also if it

were well polished, "I'm afraid our limited accommodations are going to be severely—er—"

"Subjected to excessive internal pressure?" ventured Gordon, mischievously, taking one of his uncle's pet scientific phrases.

Mr. Howell laughed. He enjoyed this kind of fun quite as much as Gordon, and just now all hands were in high good humor.

"I'm afraid—er—the fact is, we shall be keeping open house to-morrow, but Christmas comes but once a year, as they say, and the Panama Canal doesn't open every day. A man came out in a launch to see me this afternoon—a very interesting gentleman indeed; he had two young men with him. They've recently returned from Mexico, I believe. He was—er—quite an amusing gentleman and a bit whimsical. He wanted to negotiate with me for permission to cross the Isthmus on this yacht for the purpose of securing motion pictures, in which business he is interested. I told him he could make no negotiations with me whatever, but that he was welcome as my guest. He and his party are coming aboard with their paraphernalia at six in the morning. His name is Mr. Conne."

CHAPTER XXVI

THE WORLD UNITED

"GET up, Harry, the doctors are on board. Hustle now!"

This was not the way Jack had been talking lately, and Harry sat up in astonishment, rubbing his eyes. "What's that hanging there?" said he.

"That's friend Jack's clothes, if you must know. I fell in the water last night and got drowned."

"Wh-a-a-a-t?" Harry yawned; then, "On the level, Jack, what's that string of clothes for?"

Jack leaned down over the lower berth, confidentially. "Don't mention it to a living soul," said he; "can I trust you?"

"Of course you can."

"The spillway broke last night and the ocean is *simply drenched*. The ship was *saturated*."

"Have you gone daft?" said Harry, puzzled.

"Hustle up, now, you old son of trouble, and toddle into the dining-room," said Jack, departing so that Harry might have more room in their cramped quarters. Looking through the porthole, Harry watched him sauntering down the deck sing-

ing the Culebra boys' battle-song, which had wōn many a ball game :

“ With never a kick,
And nobody sick,
And the boss on the job with his shovel and pick;
Are we? We sure am.
With everybody happy,
And all hands well,
Hurrah for Uncle Sam-u-el!
Hurrah for Uncle Sam! ”

It was certainly a great mystery. But Jack was glad to get back, thought Harry, and that was the secret of it. So he made up his mind to enter into Jack's happiness as much as he could, though he really had no heart for gayety. He would try not to think of that awful thing, the truth of which he could not, even now, realize. For look where he would, in his mind's eye he saw Gordon, and the thought that he would never see that round, merry face again unnerved him. He was not strong enough yet to wrestle with the blow.

When he emerged on deck, he could see flags and streamers and signs of preparation on shore. The very air seemed charged with excitement and expectancy. The harbor was full of vessels, all gay with pennants, and tugs and launches were hurrying about with an air of great importance. The old De Lesseps palace, close by the Commission wharf, was covered with flags, and the grove of cocoanut

palms upon its lawn supported a continuous line of festooned bunting. Even the prosaic dry dock out toward Monkey Hill had the national colors draped over its ugly gates. Harry's face grew wistful again as he saw all these preparations. He felt that somehow he was not a part of it all.

When the doctors were through with them, Jack led him to the ship's ladder. Below in the blue swell rocked a trim little open launch as white as snow.

"Ready?" called up a young fellow in white sailor garb.

"What are you going to do?" Harry asked in surprise.

"Push you over if you don't go down. You remember old Mr. Wentworth, don't you?"

Harry gave a quick look at his friend and went down the ladder.

"Is that Mr. Wentworth's yacht?" he asked as they started.

"It is not."

"Why did you ask me if I remembered Mr. Wentworth?"

"Because I chose to."

"Where is Mr. Wentworth?"

"Home, feeding his chickens, probably."

"Jack, what's up?"

"The flags. Ask me another one."

His gayety seemed almost heartless. He ap-

peared to have forgotten altogether the terrible thing that had happened.

"What are you going to do, Jack?" Harry asked quietly, after a few minutes' silence.

"Make you a small payment on account. Look over there now. You don't happen to notice a fresh-looking urchin standing at the rail of that yacht, do you; right close to that man?"

"What—who is it?" asked Harry, more bewildered than ever.

"It's the only original Boy Scout, guaranteed; if not satisfied, you get your money back."

With tense, white face and straining eyes, Harry gazed at the small figure standing by the yacht's rail. Was this another vision of his fever-weakened brain? But a frantic shout reassured him.

"Hey, Harry—o-o-oh, Harry! I put a stop to a revolution on this Isthmus! I can prove it—and I'm *not* dead. You can ask this man if it isn't so!"

No, he was not dead; he was very, very much alive.

Dazed and still staring blankly, Harry was pulled on board the yacht. "Kid—" he could only gasp. There was Gordon, shouting to every one to stand back and keep still and give him a chance. "Harry, I was telling a girl about you, she lives up in—"

"Harry boy," interrupted a familiar voice as a hand was thrust over Gordon's shoulder to grasp his own, "if Vasco Nuñez was only here! If you ex-

pect to stay on this yacht, Harry, you've got to promise not to interfere with the camera work; no gallant rescues, understand?"

The sound of his voice saved Harry from collapsing. "Oh, Mr. Conne," he said, "it's good to see you, too. I suppose you've been telling them all about that brave act of mine. I don't care, you can tell them whatever you like."

That was the way he felt. And was it any wonder? Clustered about him were Gordon and the Howell boys and Mr. Howell, and Andy Breen and George Warren and Mr. Conne, with his exasperating smile, and—yes, there was little Pedro, in a clean khaki suit.

"What d' you think of our guide and interpreter, Harry?"

But the thing which amused Mr. Conne most was Gordon's stopping the revolution. "I was just puzzling my head what we ought to do about that, Harry, when the little fellow here settled the whole business for us. He persuaded his uncle to sell a leaky old motor-boat to our friend Zamora, in New Orleans, and Zamora, it seems, fills it with firearms and starts across the gulf. Exit Zamora."

"Is he dead, then?" asked Harry.

"Couldn't be deader. You saw the remains of the *Scout*, I hear?"

For the next half-hour everybody talked at once, explaining and correcting everybody else's expla-

nations. Harry was the center of interest. It was in vain Mr. Howell, seeing that he was not yet over strong, tried to drag him below. He was just about to insist when Harry, with his arm over Gordon's shoulder, wandered off with him out of this bedlam of talk and laughter.

"Harry, oh Harry, those Howell fellows are getting no more than they deserve. I don't feel sorry for them a bit."

"How, Kid?"

"They said you were a quitter and you weren't a hero; but girls know more about those things than fellows do, Harry, and the girl, that girl up in Whitville, she said you must be a hero. I told her all about you, Harry, and you see she was right. Her name is Martha Holden and— What's the matter?"

"Nothing, Kid; go on."

"And, Harry, we owe them a good turn for what they did."

"We've done them the good turn, Kid," said Harry, quietly. "I brought her brother back; he was going away, but now he'll answer roll-call in his regiment to-morrow morning."

Jack stood a little apart, leaning against the cabin and watching these two, and now he was joined by Mr. Howell, who had been very much attracted to the young soldier.

"That's a good picture," said Jack, nodding

toward Harry and Gordon. "I like to watch them."

"Yes," said Mr. Howell; "yes, it is a good picture, my boy, and best of all, you painted it."

In celebration of this happy reunion, a sumptuous breakfast was served in the beautiful cabin of Mr. Howell's yacht. Outside, the whistles tooted and the harbor became busier and gayer. At nine o'clock the Colonel was coming out. Then things would move rapidly.

Mr. Howell, sitting at the head of the table, beamed hospitably on his guests. But he was not the kind to keep a secret, and it was apparent from his significant smiles and mysterious manner that something was up. Finally, he put the whole responsibility on Mr. Conne by saying, "Mr. Conne, will you announce our—er—our little—er—plan?"

Mr. Conne, his hands in his pockets and his head cocked sideways, rose and said, "Well, friends, dear teachers and fellow-classmates, as you all know, our hospitable young host, Mr. Howell, has held up Colonel Goethals for the privilege of following his vessel through the Canal. It seems he and the Colonel used to know each other in college—used to go out under the trees in the moonlight and talk strains and pressures and vibrations and other nonsense, together. So when he went ashore and reminded the Colonel of that, the Colonel wept to think of those dear old strains and pressures of his

boyhood days. Then young Mr. Howell came back at him with the statement that he is connected with the Bureau of Standards in Washington and wanted to go through the Canal. I don't know what the Bureau of Standards is, and I don't care. The more he tells me about it, the less I know. I don't know why they keep standards in a bureau, anyway; I should think a roll-top desk would be better.

"But this is the point. When we waltz out of the Canal into the Pacific Ocean, what are we going to do next? Young Mr. Howell, who's been reading dime novels and is just crazy for adventure, makes the preposterous suggestion that we beat it up the coast to San Miguel Bay, the very spot where our old college chum, Balboa, looked over the top of his spectacles at the Pacific Ocean in the year fifteen sumpty-sump. Then he proposes that we hike up along the old Balboa trail, camping, and take a squint at Balboa's Tree. That's the tree our old friend shinnied up and saw *both* oceans.

"I told him, no, the boys wouldn't stand for any such nonsense as that; Harry isn't strong yet and he's had adventures enough; and his own sons wouldn't hear of such a thing, with all its discomforts and rough life. Jack here's got to report in the morning, too. In short, I told him it wasn't possible. But he's cooked up some scheme for getting Jack's leave extended and fixing up all the difficulties. The climate down here seems to have got

into his head. Now, I just want to say that if he carts us down there against our wills, I'll film up the whole thing from first to last and expose him on every sheet of canvas in the United States when we get home! That's all I've got to say!"

It was all he had a chance to say, for "young Mr. Howell" was the center of an enthusiastic assault. Gordon's face shone with unutterable glee. Will and Joe—you should have seen them. You should have seen the broad grin on little Pedro's face. You should have seen the coffee on the floor after Gordon led the storming party for poor defenseless Mr. Howell's chair. Only one of the party turned to Mr. Conne, and that was Harry.

"You're responsible for this, and you did it for my sake, didn't you?"

"Harry, you must get hold of Vasco Nuñez before we start. He's president of the syndicate, and he's entitled to go."

"He's in good hands," laughed Harry.

"Well, my boy," said Mr. Conne, turning to Gordon, who had come around to his chair. "Wonders never cease, do they? Hello, that's quite a trinket, isn't it?" he added, noticing the boy's fob. "What is it, a locket? Oh yes, a broken one. And to think you had me down for a murder two years ago! You're a great boy!" he burst out with genial amusement, holding Gordon close to him.

Just then there was a pandemonium of tooting

and whistling, and everybody rushed on deck. They had evidently missed seeing the "Old Man" go aboard the ship, for she was far across the harbor where the shouting was deafening, as, carrying the flags of all nations, she slowly nosed her way into the channel of the great Canal.

For a little while, all hands watched Mr. Conne making ready the camera, and then the Commission launch tooted the welcome signal that the *Wanderer* might proceed. It was a moment that the boys never forgot. All hands gathered at the rail forward, as the graceful white yacht slowly approached the channel.

It seemed nothing but a broad, muddy river, the vivid green foliage crowding thick on both sides. But if it had been the Nile, it could not have held greater interest. Harry stood a little apart; he had a strange feeling that he would like to be by himself. Then Jack and Gordon joined him. There was no laughter and very little talking. A feeling of reverence and solemnity seemed to pervade the party. "We ought to be thankful we're Americans," said Mr. Howell, soberly. Mr. Conne was busy with his apparatus, but he answered, "Who said we're not?"

They were heading due south, and as the ship advanced slowly through the jungle-bordered river, the Caribbean faded away until there was only the faintest glimpse of the receding sea. The tropic

sun beat down on the left of the vessel. It was very quiet. So, for a long while, as it seemed, they moved slowly up this muggy way. Yet it was only seven miles, and long before that distance had been covered a clean, symmetrical white mass, snowy amid the green foliage, loomed directly in their path. At first it looked like a snowdrift wedged between the cabin of verdant hills through which they were to pass. Then, presently, the clean lines of concrete showed it to be the Gatun locks. The shores for the last mile or so were lined thick with people, and Harry knew there must be many familiar faces among them.

"I don't see any dam," said Gordon. "Where is it?"

"There," said Harry, pointing, "but it's so overgrown with the jungle that you can hardly tell it from the hills."

As they reached the locks it seemed almost as if their journey had ended, for there before them rose a sheer wall of iron. But straight ahead, apparently standing on the top of the iron wall, they could see the Colonel's ship. As they watched, it slowly disappeared, and then out on the pier came two electric towing engines and made fast, one to the bow and one to the stern of the *Wanderer*.

Between them and the iron wall there swung from bank to bank an enormous chain, which now sank slowly out of sight in the water. The boys watched

breathlessly as the great gates swung open and the yacht was towed through into the first lock. Two more engines ("mules," as they were called) were made fast on her starboard side, and then for about fifteen minutes, which seemed to the fascinated boys at least an hour, the yacht slowly rose as the water lifted to the level of the next lock, twenty-eight feet above.

Again they saw the Colonel's ship straight ahead, now apparently standing on a still higher concrete shelf. Again it disappeared, the gates in front of them opened, and they were towed through into the second lock.

"What's that?" said Gordon, pointing to a tower-house on the shore. Harry was too absorbed to answer or even to hear the question, but Mr. Conne explained that from this tower was operated all the intricate machinery which lay in long tunnels running the whole length of the locks.

"Here we go upstairs again," said Joe Howell, as the water slowly rose, lifting the yacht to the level of the third lock, through which they were towed and out into Gatun Lake.

"How strange it looks," said Jack; "that little island over there must be the top of Lyon Hill. Don't you remember it, Harry, before the water was turned in? We're eighty-five feet above sea level now, you know," he added, seeing Gordon's incredulous look at the little dot of land.

Out across the broad lake they steamed at full speed, but within an hour's time the channel narrowed again and they had to slow down because of the sudden turns and twists, so sharp at times that the Colonel's ship was often hidden from their sight, although she was close ahead. The hills now pressed close on either side.

Harry drew a long breath as they slowly entered Culebra Cut, passing the Marine Camp on the left and then Camp Otis on the right, where he had spent so many pleasant hours with Jack. There ahead of them loomed up Gold Hill and Contractor's Hill, on either side of the channel. As they neared Culebra, where the walls were very sheer and precipitous, he pointed out to Gordon many familiar things. There was the well-known building of the Culebra Club; there was the spot where he had made his perilous descent into the Cut; there in the distance he could just distinguish his own quarters. He was still weak from his illness and the tears stood in his eyes as he recognized the familiar scenes and realized that never again would he help old "82" to hew her way through those rugged hills.

Gordon was all excitement. He could scarcely believe even yet that they were actually crossing the backbone of the continent. It seemed all wrong. The masts and funnels of the ships looked strangely out of place between those crowding hills. The

pilot of the Colonel's vessel blew a long blast, and a thousand strange sounds echoed about them.

"Is *this* the Pacific Ocean?" Gordon asked in a disappointed tone, as they were towed out of the lock at Pedro Miguel.

"No, my boy," laughed Mr. Conne. "This is only Miraflores Lake. See, there's where old Forty-seven used to dump her dirt. Harry'll tell you about it. He claims she made a record, but don't you believe it. IOI beat her to the dump every time."

Two more locks were yet to be passed through, and then they were actually in Pacific waters, although still eight miles from the coast.

Already dusk was falling, and the sun had disappeared behind the hills. Numberless lights now shone out, and the channel stretched before them like a roadway with lights on either side. Far ahead shone out the brilliant illuminations of the Pacific fortifications, and away to the right they caught the red glimmer of the lights from the leper colony on the coast.

So through the long lane they steamed, amid shouting and cheering on every hand, and out into the long, slow roll of the Pacific.

CHAPTER XXVII

UNDER BALBOA'S TREE

THE next day every one was allowed "shore leave," as Mr. Conne called it, for errands and preparations, for on the following morning the *Wanderer* was to sail forth with her band of adventurers.

"I feel just like a Spaniard," said Gordon, "going to penetrate where the—what is it?—where the foot of white man never trod." He had, of course, been told of the mysterious hints dropped by Vasco Nuñez, and he had not the slightest doubt, he said, that they should find "untold treasures." "What reason would a parrot have for jollying us?" he demanded. He had such unbounded confidence in the success of the expedition that he even proposed a "bloody quarrel" over the division of the spoils.

"Like real true Spaniards," Mr. Conne laughed; "and I'll tell you what we'll do, Gordon; we'll do this thing right or we won't do it at all! I'll be Carltonio Conneriez, and you'll be the young cavalier, Gordoneria Lorderes."

"And—and the ship ought to be wrecked," said Gordon, "and—"

But at that Mr. Howell (Cavalier Howellizzo, as Mr. Conne christened him) put his foot down. They had had enough wreck already, he said. But still Mr. Conne and Gordon planned and plotted, bestowing the most atrociously unpronounceable names on all the party. They had some reason to fear, they announced, that a large Spanish fleet was setting forth from Cadiz to apprehend them and take them back to Spain in chains, so they represented to Harry (Count Harrimus de Arnoldo) that if he wished to go ashore and barter with the natives he had better be about it. The "Count" replied that he wished to buy some tooth paste at the Commissary Stores, at which Gordon and Mr. Conne were both horrified.

"Who ever heard of a Spanish explorer buying tooth paste?" said Gordon, disgustedly. Even the Marquis Jackelquez Holdenio said the very idea was preposterous.

Early in the morning most of the party (disguised as modern Americans) went ashore in the launch; Mr. Conne and his party to get some belongings at the Tivoli; Jack to report to his officer; Harry (taking Gordon with him, of course) to call and shop and say good-by and, last but not least, to bring aboard the renowned leader and instigator of the expedition, Vasco Nuñez de Balboa. Mr. Howell also went ashore, but what he went for was a mystery. He *said* it was to list up some lateral

vibration notes and congratulate the "Old Man," and to secure a man as extra help aboard, a thing made necessary by the sudden increase of the ship's company. Mr. Conne, however, declared that he went to gather poison for arrows, and to bid farewell to his beautiful daughter, the Princess Vibratia Pressurius, whom he might never see again.

Harry knew his labor on the Canal was over, for the "dry excavation work" was at an end, and moreover he was in no condition to work now. He had all but won the medal and had lost it to save and gain a friend, who had taken him to another friend whom he had thought dead. Was this not enough?

But when Jack went ashore, he said good-by to them all, for it was doubtful whether things could be so arranged that he might join them.

Gordon was happy enough to spend the day in going about on shore, meeting old friends of Harry's and sight-seeing. But the Isthmus did not seem like the same place to Harry. At Empire, they found that Mr. Barney and his little family had gone to the States the week before, his work being done, and the homelike little bungalow was closed. The thought of Mr. Barney was now the one thorn pricking at Harry's conscience, and he wondered what the burly shovelman thought of him and of his sudden disappearance. He consoled himself with the thought that when he visited Jack in Missouri, as he meant to do, he might be able to see him, and

such indeed proved to be the case. But Harry's life on the Mississippi is part of another story.

The flooding of the Cut had changed the whole aspect of things along the line and seemed to have destroyed, with one fell blow, the old familiar life of which he had grown so fond. Some of his friends had gone home; others had been transferred and were in quarters far removed from where he had known them. In a word, the big happy family was breaking up.

But one of "82's" company the boys did meet, and that was Mike Kerrigan. He was in the Empire Commissary now and went over to Silver Quarters with them at noon, where Gordon had the privilege of eating one of Uncle Sam's world-renowned thirty-cent meals,—those meals which put all the restaurant keepers in Panama out of business. It was good to see Mike; he seemed like the only column left standing in a city which had burned down. And here, in his humble but spotless little room, a voice greeted Harry which took him back (how far away it seemed) to the day when he first landed on the Isthmus.

"Hello," it said, and as Harry opened the cage door, Vasco, to Gordon's unbounded delight, stepped cautiously but promptly out upon his master's hand. "Br-r-r-r," he said, and bent his head low for Harry to stroke it.

"Hello," said Harry; "hello, Cap."

"Pretty Kid," said Vasco.

"Sure an' he knows you," said Mike, a generous grin lighting up his face.

"You see," said Harry to Gordon, "I'm the 'kid' now; that's what he calls me, and he has a right to, too, for *he* can remember way back to the days of 'Clementina, 'Forty-niner,' can't you, Cap?"

"Poor Fred — balana — banana — poor Fred Bann— Hello, Harry boy, Kid."

"What did he say—Fred what?" asked Gordon, pricking up his ears.

But Vasco began to preen his feathers as if he did not wish to be further interviewed.

Mike had been over to Colon and told Harry that the Balboa Bazaar was closed and its proprietor had disappeared.

There was not much time to talk with the good-natured Irishman, but what did Harry do (on learning that he was to finish his work at the Commissary on Saturday) but drag him along down to the *Wanderer* and present him to Mr. Howell, who promptly engaged him as extra boat hand.

That night Gordon, Mr. Conne, and Vasco held a solemn conclave at Vasco's throne, or perch, of state in the cabin, and a dark secret was revealed in connection with Mike's past. It seemed that during the time Vasco had lived with him he had frequently heard Mike refer to an estate in Spain, and

Vasco, by hiding his head under his wing and pretending to be asleep, had discovered that Mike was in reality the Hidalgo Don Mikeezo Kerrigio, disguised as a laborer on the Panama Canal! He admitted his identity with a grin when confronted by Mr. Conne, and was given the important military post of assistant steward on the *Wanderer*.

And yet one more surprise there was before the party started, and that was sprung by the wily Cavalier Howellizzo, whose ways were dark and mysterious (a master in plot and intrigue, according to Mr. Conne), and who at supper made the following announcement:

"Boys, you see I've brought aboard with me our friend Jack, who, having duly reported at Camp Otis, has been granted an extra leave of thirty days. I was able, I am glad to say, to accomplish this by—"

"By poisoning Colonel Greene at Camp Otis, and falsifying the papers of the regiment," interrupted Mr. Conne in a stage whisper to Gordon.

Mr. Howell smilingly rubbed his innocent bald head and continued, "I have seen Colonel Goethals and—er—he tells me that in the case of—er—the Count Harrimus de Arnoldo, a letter was recently received at the Administration Building which he was kind enough to show me. It—it was—er—in fact, from a gentleman, a Mr. Wentworth, who related an incident of—er—I forget his real name,"

he smiled, "so I'll call him Harry. The Colonel had been very much impressed with this letter, for at the time of its writing and indeed at the time of its receipt, the fate of our young friend was still doubtful. On hearing the subsequent circumstances from me, which I asked him to regard confidentially, he said that in view of our young friend's generous refusal to leave the Isthmus for a vacation at a time when his services were much needed, the time he eventually did see fit to take without leave will be credited to him as a vacation. So he entrusted to me this little box, but before I part with it, I have one thing more to say."

Harry's eyes were riveted upon the box, but they were so suffused that he could scarcely see it. Gordon rose from his chair and sat on the arm of Harry's, listening eagerly. Jack looked straight across the table at Harry. Mr. Conne, at the foot of the table, cocked his head and looked quizzically about as if amused to see how Harry would act.

"My boy," said Mr. Howell, "before I called on Colonel Goethals, he had, it seems, received a call from one who, as it appears to me, is the best kind of friend a boy could have. He had pleaded your cause so convincingly that there was little left for me to say. The Colonel is not always an easy man to talk with, but there are some men so gifted that they can talk with anybody, great or small, high or low.

"My boy, the little medal which this box contains represents the required period of patient, faithful, honest work. But do not forget who went to Colonel Goethals, unbeknown to you, and asked to have the question answered (just for curiosity, as he said) whether Uncle Sam intended to disgrace himself by getting out of paying one of his debts on a mere technicality. Who does that sound like, Harry?"

The boy rose, the precious medal now in his hand, and leaving Jack and Gordon for the moment, went around and grasped Mr. Carleton Conne by the hand.

"You've always been my friend from the first minute I saw you," he said.

"Brush that hair back, Harry boy; that's right," said Mr. Conne, patting the boy's shoulder in his comfortable, friendly way; "run in and show that to Vasco now; we've got to keep on the right side of him, you know, Harry boy. Uncle Sam has lost his job, and now Vasco Nuñez is boss!"

And he sat back contemplating the pale but happy boy, and keeping time with a pencil, he hummed a stanza which carried Harry back to the Tivoli and to that evening more than a year ago:

"In a cavern, in a canon,
Excavating for a mine,
Lived a miner, 'forty-niner,
And his daughter, Clementine."

They made a prosperous voyage down the west coast, and in about four days dropped anchor in the historic Gulf of San Miguel, which indents the widening Isthmus nearly half its breadth. They were at a spot memorable in the annals of the Isthmus. Here the intrepid Balboa had knelt reverently on the wild shore and, thanking God for his deliverance from the savage and the jungle, had taken possession of the country in the name of the Spanish crown.

"How it must have seemed to him," said Mr. Howell, "emerging from that tangled wilderness, to gaze out over this vast, unknown sea, and to know that he was the first white man to scan its placid bosom."

"To how its which?" asked Mr. Conne.

"To realize," said Mr. Howell, "that after all his hardships and sufferings, he was at last permitted to—to—"

"To get away with it," said Andy Breen.

They were now to go ashore and push up through the jungle to the famous tree.

"Vasco," said Mr. Conne, "if this turns out to be a practical joke of yours, you'll come to an untimely end."

"Untimely end is good," laughed Harry. "He's old enough to be your grandfather now, aren't you, Cap?"

Vasco himself remained aboard, as also Mr.

Howell and Mike, whose services were needed there.

Early the next morning the others went ashore in the launch and started up into the tangled mazes of the interior.

If we were to follow their footsteps in that adventurous quest, it would require another volume. And it is a matter which we may well doubt whether any book is big enough for the Panama Canal and something else besides. Let it suffice then to say that the sturdy band pressed forward, hewing away the jungle by day and bivouacking by night. And if you think that the time dragged, with Mr. Conne along, you are welcome to think so. Also if you think there was no jollying—very well, think as you please.

It was a journey which required all of Harry's skill as a woodsman, for such path as there might have been years before had been entirely overgrown and closed up by the luxuriant tropical vegetation. Yet a path hewn through the jungle is apt, like a wound, to leave a scar which always remains, if the scout or woodsman be but skillful enough to find it. And so, thanks to Harry's practiced and observant eye, they picked their way along, hewing out their path with machettes as they advanced. Harry carried the old knife which he had taken from little Pedro, and which had belonged to Requelme, with the initials F. B. carved in its worn handle.

At last, one afternoon, they came in sight of the ancient tree, rising out of the surrounding jungle, isolated and lonely, and knew it from the rustic ladder which, it was supposed, some of the California gold-hunters had erected to aid them to its highest branches in the hope that they might obtain some cheering glimpse of one or other of the distant coasts that they were seeking. And the old tree had not disappointed them; for whether the adventurous 'Forty-niner cast his hopeful vision over that tangled lowland toward the west where fortune perhaps awaited him, or whether he bent a wistful gaze northward, having succeeded, or perhaps failed, still the old tree showed him his first substantial vision of the far-off gold fields or of his distant home, as the case might be.

Ninety-odd miles away the great Canal was now open, and the mammoth drills and shovels which had done the work, and the trim and modern houses of Uncle Sam's vast force, stood about to rob the hills and jungle of the ancient solitude. But here the scene was the same as when Balboa first viewed it.

One by one the boys climbed up and scanned the distant oceans. No sign of life was there, no sound, in all the country roundabout; nothing but the intricate and vivid mass of interwoven growths extending far into the distance and ending in another wilderness of blue, the far-off ocean. Gordon,

perched upon the topmost branches of the old tree, was silent; yes, even he was silent, as he contemplated for a moment the forsaken scene about him. He was thinking of Balboa, and then imagining himself to be a 'forty-niner who had left his burden of the precious metal on the ground below and shinnied up for a welcome glimpse of the Atlantic, when the voice of Carleton Conne recalled him to himself.

"What ho, Cavalier Lorderas! Do you want your bacon in a sandwich or will you have it plain?"

"Don't bother me," said Gordon, contemptuously.

"I'm making a rice pudding, Kid," called Harry.

But Gordon scorned to answer. You can't hear such a call away back in the fifteenth century, nor even in the year 1849.

"Here's something to fetch him," said George Warren, in an awed whisper. He had just risen from clearing away a little space about the tree.

It did fetch him, for what George had brought to light was nothing less than a human skull.

In an instant the boy was down, and the entire party gathered about the little space that George had cleared and examined a collection of white bones which lay spread about an area of four or five feet. They were dry and powdery. The skull, which Mr. Conne held, was broken, but from what cause who should say? As Harry gazed at it, and at these

other grim mementos so long concealed beneath the tangled brush, he shuddered to think that this very machette which he held might have felled the person whose bones they now gazed upon, silent and awe-struck.

Whose were they?

Presently, Gordon, ever observant, picked up what seemed at first to be a smooth pebble, but scraping the earth from it he found it to be the half of a gold locket which exactly matched the little fragment that he wore. Within it was a picture which seemed to have been that of a girl, but it was too defaced by time and the elements to distinguish the features.

After a moment of silence, Gordon spoke, low and reverently: "Harry, it's—it's—Fred Bannard—Miss Bannard's brother."

There was a moment of dead silence.

"And that is what Vasco has been trying so long to tell me," said Harry, then. "*Poor Fred Bannard under Balboa's tree.* And all his talk about bananas and balanas was just trying to get that last name—Bannard. Poor fellow," Harry added, shaking his head, "I wonder what happened to him. Poor Miss Bannard, she—"

"Rich Miss Bannard, you mean!" exclaimed Joe, dragging an old leather bag out of the underbrush. "This is filled with yellow dust—it's gold!"

And so, indeed, it proved. And poor Miss Ban-

nard would live out the remainder of her span of life in comfort.

Here would be a good turn worthy of the most chivalrous scout who ever forgot himself to make another happy!

But who shall tell the story of that broken skull and those moldering fragments which had once been a man?

Indeed, I know no more of it than what I have learned from Vasco Nuñez, and that has been told you as fast as I could get it out of him. Not another syllable would he ever say. But there was room for speculation, and as the party pressed their way back to the shore they did speculate on many things. They knew from little Pedro (and they had him repeat it now) that old Requelme, years and years ago, had gone with another man (an American, Pedro thought) to search for treasure, *and had come back alone*. Nor would he ever tell what had happened to his companion. To whom did the machette first belong, and how happened it to be in the possession of Requelme? Was it merely a coincidence that the initials in its worn handle were the same as those of the man whose poor remains now lay before them? Had Requelme murdered his companion for the other's gold, and then failed to find it? Or had he left his comrade to die in the jungle, alone?

And the bird which had been the American boy's pet and faithful companion,—of what strange and

terrible deed had he been perhaps the only witness? What was it that he had striven so hard to make known to Harry?

Ah, these are matters which happened years and years ago, in the adventurous days of "Clementina, 'Forty-niner," when strange, dark deeds were committed in remote and lonely places, because of the thirst for gold.

What happened on the Isthmus of Panama in the year 1849 is not a part of this story. Yet it is worth while remembering one little scoutish fact to which I would call your respectful attention. Harry Arnold, remembering the good scout rule about cruelty to any living thing, had purchased Vasco, and Vasco had put it in Harry's way to repay Miss Bannard for a hundred little kindnesses. And Gordon Lord was right; a good turn (like the scout catching-mitt) is indestructible, and is sure to bear fruit some time or other.

If you should happen to be in Oakwood, New Jersey, and are passing the big, old-fashioned Arnold house, notice in the bay window a mahogany standard with a natural-wood perch upon it. That perch came from Balboa's Tree. And there upon it in the quiet dignity and complaisance of old age, sits Vasco Nuñez de Balboa, quite as independent and perverse as ever.

He spends most of his time preening his feathers

and ruminating on his long and eventful career. There is a handsome brass cage near by, but he seldom goes into it. He does pretty much as he pleases. Yet he usually condescends to talk with Harry's mother, or with Miss Bannard when she drops in, or with Marjorie Danforth with whom he is sometimes quite chatty and confidential. Dr. Brent, the boys' scoutmaster, says that he thinks the softer and gentler tones of the girl's voice incline the parrot to talk. And maybe so.

Her voice is soft and gentle enough, goodness knows.

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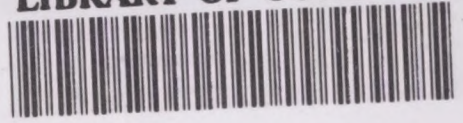
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